Manual of Christian Perfection

By Msgr. P. J. STOCKMAN

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MANUAL OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

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ESPECIALLY DESIGNED for the instruction of novices who sincerely desire to enter a religious community. It may be read with much fruit by all those who wish to lead exemplary lives.

Adapted from the celebrated Method of Spiritual Direction

by the

REV. J. B. SCARAMELLI, S.J.

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Reader: It is supposed that when you begin to peruse this Manual, you do so through an earnest desire of advancing in virtue. We take it also for granted that you are convinced of the expediency of choosing the state of life which God has destined for you at your birth, because He attaches to it special help and graces. For men there are three states to which a special vocation is attached: the priesthood, the religious state in a community approved by the Church, and the lay state. Women are called only to the two last named. In the lay state there are the state of marriage and the state of virginity. The latter is in itself more perfect than the former but not for all, for to some the words of St. Paul may be applied, that "It is better to marry than to burn."[1]

The priesthood excels in dignity all other callings, although the religious state is in itself the most perfect; but again only for those who have a true vocation for it. This truth cannot fail to impress itself upon all those who are aware that in a religious community, each individual member is bound to tend towards his own perfection, and as far as he can, to strive for the perfection of all his brethren.

Although this volume may be read with fruit by priests who are in charge of religious communities and by all those who wish to live holy lives, it is mainly intended for the instruction of postulants and novices, who desire to embrace the religious state, whether in a contemplative order or in an active religious institute, for the practical lessons are particularly applicable to them. The contemplative orders, in which religious are to seek the perfection of their own souls and the spiritual welfare of others in the service of God, through prayer and penances, like the Carmelites, are in themselves more perfect than the other religious orders

[1] 1 Cor. vii. 9.

or congregations, who give themselves up to spiritual and temporal works of mercy. To the latter class belong nearly all the religious orders and institutes of modern times. The growing needs of modern society seem to demand exterior acts of charity, undertaken for the love of God and tending to the neighbor's temporal as well as spiritual welfare.

Active religious orders are also partly contemplative, for no member of a religious community can remain a good religious, unless spurred on by prayer and mortification, which are the foundation of a contemplative life, together with the practice of the virtues that are indispensable to Christian perfection.

To embrace a religious life, two things are required: on the part of a postulant or novice, proper intention, and on the part of God, true vocation.

Purely human motives must be ignored by the candidates for the admission into a religious order, for they are incompatible with a state that has for primary end the supernatural life of the soul. The following motives should be shunned: a desire to escape the troubles and vicissitudes common in the world; security from bodily want; an easy and comfortable life; disappointment in some important expectation; the love of a person who has become a religious and from whom the separation seems unbearable; excessive grief over the loss of relatives and friends, for which consolation is sought among sympathizing religious; mistaken condescension to parents who unduly urge their sons or daughters to enter a monastery or convent, etc.

Such and similar motives may be occasions that lead to the desire of the religious state, for the ways of Providence are inscrutable, but these human motives should be set aside or drowned in the supernatural motives, before novices are accepted in a religious community. The only motives that should animate young men and women to seek admission in a convent or monastery, are the will of God, desire to secure their salvation or to lead a more perfect life, and zeal for the honor of God and for the temporal and spiritual welfare of their neighbor. The last three motives are included in the first, God's holy will, for our heavenly Father desires that all should be saved and that none should be lost, and

He calls upon all without exception to strive for perfection. "Be ye perfect as also your Father in heaven is perfect."[3]

The second thing required for a religious life, as we said, is, besides a good intention, a true vocation. Vocation in general is the call of God to us to occupy the place He has destined for each one, when we came into the world and thus to work out our salvation. If God calls every one to a particular state of life, He will also supply what is necessary and useful to carry out His merciful designs in his behalf, and therefore it is very important that each one of us should know his vocation. As for the vocation to a religious life—this life being the most perfect—no one may, on account of the obligations attached to it, presume to embrace it without a true vocation, for this would be to expose himself to bring misery and affliction upon himself as well as upon other members of the community. He would also render himself liable to be deprived of the special graces attached to his vocation, without which a religious could not hope to properly perform the duties of his holy state.

What are the signs of a vocation to a religious life?

Setting aside the extraordinary evidences of a true vocation, such as are related in the New Testament and in the lives of many saints, the ordinary signs of a religious vocation are these three: aptitude, inclination and the approbation of one's director of conscience and of the ecclesiastical authorities.

(a) Aptitude or capacity. If God calls any one to a particular state of life, He provides the necessary qualities to properly exercise the calling and to comply with its obligations. This is pre-eminently true of the vocation to the religious state.

By capacity or aptitude we understand the physical, intellectual and moral fitness of the postulant or novice for the Christian life in a religious community. If the candidate for admission lacks that capacity, it is a sign that he cannot be called to the religious state, for which he is not fit. God cannot contradict Himself. The Church is the sole judge of the capacity of each candidate who knocks for admission at the door of a convent or monastery, because she has

[3] Matt. v. 8.

instituted all religious orders or has approved them; she alone understands her own necessities to successfully save souls, and therefore she alone is constituted judge of the qualities suitable to those who enter her service.

(b) Inclination or attraction to the religious state is ordinarily a proof of a vocation thereto, especially so, if it be persistent after the candidate has become acquainted with the obligations imposed upon the members of a particular order or congregation. The reason is that God makes His calling to the holy state known by a providential affection for it, which, if it is not resisted, becomes a strong inclination. This inclination of the heart may even exist with a certain repugnance to one or more obligations attached to membership in a religious order or institute. This repugnance is easily overcome by the strong will of those who place their trust in God and are attentive to His inspirations. How many men and women have lost their vocation by despising the Divine Call to a state of perfection through their attachment to worldly frivolities!

(c) The third sign of a true vocation is the approbation of those whom God has appointed directors of men's consciences, and of the prelates and other superiors who are responsible before God for the proper government of the religious houses under their jurisdiction.

No one, on earth, is as competent to judge of the vocation of an individual person as the confessor of the penitent, who has disclosed to him the secrets of his heart. The decision of one's confessor may be safely followed, for the Almighty is in some sense responsible for the judgment of His minister in the sacred tribunal of Penance.

The Sacred Congregation of Religious, Bishops and other dignitaries of the Church, to whom the Holy See has delegated the necessary powers, approve the rules and constitutions of the religious orders and congregations, and they may in some cases grant dispensations from their statutes, but superiors of religious houses judge of the aptitude and capacity of the candidates who seek admission, and as to the vocation of each individual candidate, either his confessor or spiritual director is the proper judge of it.

Hence, of the three signs of a true vocation, the approbation of one's confessor and of the proper superiors of each community is the safest to follow, for our inclinations may deceive us; self-love may warp our judgment as to our capacity and other qualities, but by obeying those whom God has placed over us to guide and direct us, we are proof against all deception from within and without.

Thus, when any one is perplexed by doubts regarding his vocation, he should forthwith consult his spiritual director or his confessor, who knows him intimately and is therefore the best judge of his vocation; and although it is not always a sin to disregard the director's advice, because of the doubts engendered in one's mind in such troublesome circumstances, nevertheless they who stubbornly adhere to their opinion contrary to that of their confessor and director, endanger their happiness in this world and in the next. Temptations are sure to assail those whose inclination is to abandon the world for the perfect life in a religious community, but humble and devout prayer will dispel fear and timidity, and overcome any and all obstacles, whatever may be their source.

The most common temptation of the evil one is the suggestion that the candidate for admission to the vows lacks the necessary virtues. The diffidence thus created is easily overcome by the simple truth that one seeks perfection in the religious state, and therefore the desire and the will to acquire the necessary virtues of a good religious are sufficient.

Often parents are a serious obstacle to the vocation of their children. Let such parents be reminded that by opposing their children's vocation, they show a greater solicitude for themselves than for the welfare of their sons and daughters, whose temporal and eternal happiness they endanger, by their undue interference. Those who feel called to offer up their lives to God and are thwarted in their laudable design by those, to whom next to God they owe their existence, should be admonished not to be hasty and not to act without consulting a prudent and wise ecclesiastic; for in cases of parental opposition to the vocation of their offspring, circumstances vary so much that it is impossible

to lay down general rules to guide those who feel themselves called to a state of life which their father or mother seriously object. We must obey God rather than man, and on the other hand, we must obey our parents in all that is not sin, as long as we remain under the parental roof and even thereafter, the advice of parents should be received with the deepest respect.

Many parents imagine that they lose the affection of their children when these enter a convent or monastery. This illusion should be dispelled, for in religious houses the love and affection of sons and daughters become purer and above all more supernatural, and thus, when they join a religious community, they testify to their greater love of their parents by praying for them, and by offering up their daily Communions and their mortifications for their temporal and eternal happiness.

Religious institutes differ mainly from all other societies in that their members are bound by the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, deservedly called the three evangelical counsels, and that they live a community life under certain rules approved by competent ecclesiastical authority.[3]

These vows may be solemn or simple vows, and this distinction depends on the will of the Church, who, in view of the ends and purposes of different religious orders, admits the members of one religious institute to simple vows and those of another to solemn vows as well, but the simple vows are equally binding with the solemn vows.

Again, in some religious institutes the members thereof make only temporary vows and in others perpetual vows. It is evident that temporary vows cease to be binding after the time specified in the vows has expired; nevertheless the religious who make temporal vows in an institute in which perpetual vows are allowed, made their first vows with the intention to make those vows perpetual, and although they do not, in a strict sense, sin against their vows by leaving the institute, after the time specified in their temporary vows has elapsed, they should not do so without the approbation of their respective superiors. To say the least, it denotes an inconstancy of purpose in God's service, which should not

[3] C. J. C., Can. 487-488.

be thought of, except for grave reasons approved by ecclesiastical authority.

It need hardly be mentioned that those who have made their perpetual vows, cannot leave the order without dispensation from the Holy See or from those to whom the power has been subdelegated, or in case of congregations whose constitutions and rules were approved by the bishop of a diocese, then the dispensation may be obtained from him; in either case those dispensations are seldom granted and only for grave reasons.

The principal advantages and supernatural merits of making the vows in a convent, monastery or religious congregation are: 1. By making vows, religious offer to God what is most dear to them and most difficult to part with, namely their will, and with it, their whole being and all their actions as well. Therefore there can be nothing more acceptable to God than the sacrifice which religious make of themselves. 2. Even the most ordinary occupations of professed religious, relating to the constitutions and rules of their institute, become acts of the virtue of religion, the greatest of all moral virtues, as God is particularly honored and worshipped by a lawful vow. 3. If for any reason not dependent on their choice, religious are prevented from the observance of any exercise or duty belonging to the rules and constitutions of their institute, they do not altogether lose the merit of them. 4. The acts of any virtue *e. g.,* of charity, of obedience, etc., practiced in accordance with the rules of the order, have a double merit, one, of the virtue that is practiced, and the other, that of religion. 5. Peace and contentment, that never leave those who have given their all to their Father in heaven and persevere in their desire to seek in all things His holy will. This is the peace of God which the world cannot give and which we should prize more than all earthly goods.

We necessarily conclude, from this short explanation of the religious life, that religious should have the greatest esteem for the order to which they have been admitted. They should likewise take the greatest precautions to remain faithful to their vows, so well pleasing to their Maker, and hence gratitude to their Benefactor for the privilege of serv-

ing Him constantly and in all things, should enkindle in their breast a longing and incessant desire to become more and more perfect in order to fulfill His holy designs in their behalf.

Postulants and novices should ardently desire to be admitted to make their first vows, but notwithstanding with serenity and patience, endeavoring to become worthy of the great favor, through the practice of the exercises and virtues belonging to their future state of life.

Novitiate.

From what has been said thus far, relating to vocation and vows, it is evident that the transition from the life in the world to the religious life cannot safely and profitably be done without a time of probation, which we call the novitiate and which must last at least one full year. Novices are usually not admitted into the novitiate, until they have passed a short probation as postulants, and at least six months of postulate to precede the novitiate are required for all institutes with perpetual vows. That time is very useful, if not necessary, so that postulants may learn in a general way what will be required of them, if they persevere in their intention to dedicate their lives to God.

There is no intrinsic difference between the novitiate and the postulate: they are both times of probation, but the latter, although in itself useful, can be dispensed with as a separate state of probation, if the applicants for the religious life are few.

Postulants coming fresh from the busy and gay world, are expected to forget its attractions, its dangerous pleasures and allurements with all its false maxims. They must also wean themselves from undue attachments to friends, relatives and even to their parents. By this is not meant that they must cease to love their parents; but the sensible and emotional love for them must give way to the love which is of God and which consists in loving them in God and for God. The heart, as it were, must be emptied of self-love and of all worldly affections, so that God may reign supreme and the foundation of a religious life may be laid. If regret for having left the world and its pleasures cannot be over-

come, it is a sign that the postulant is not called to the religious state, and he or she had better return to the world, whose attractions form a tie that cannot be broken.

For the rest, whatever will be said of the novitiate is also applicable to the postulate, with this difference that novices are supposed to have acquired a certain knowledge of the obligations and virtues belonging to a religious life and have commenced to practice them, whilst postulants are only expected to have a willingness to get acquainted with the duties of the religious state, together with a strong determination to comply with them.

I. If the postulate is useful, the novitiate is indispensable, for it is the apprenticeship of the life which religious men and women should lead; it is the school of sanctity in which the detestable maxims of the world are compared with the most sublime truths of Christianity and in which the novices are constantly urged to follow in the footsteps of the Savior and of the saints. On the postulants the master or mistress will inculcate the sayings of Christ: "Love not the world nor the things that are in the world.... He that loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.... What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?" but novices are reminded besides of St. Paul's warning: "This is the will of God, the sanctification of your soul." The means of sanctification, the obstacles to it and the virtues that lead to it, are learned in the school of sanctity, but as the bare knowledge would avail nothing, novices are urged to conform their lives to the knowledge they have acquired by the practice of all the virtues, but especially of those that form the basis and end of their vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Perfection is not expected of novices and much less of postulants, but the desire of it and the sincere will to tend towards it are indispensable. The importance of the novitiate, which the Church has wisely established as the apprenticeship of the religious life, is thus shown and easily understood, for to become a good religious, one must have been a good novice. The good seed of sanctity is sown in the novitiate and there also it begins to sprout, but its fruit ripens slowly through a perfect religious life in a religious community.

II. Whilst novices are striving to learn what is expected of them in the institute they have freely chosen, and to observe its rules and constitutions that they may merit to be admitted to their profession, they will likewise find in the novitiate the means to ascertain their vocation.

(a) Prayer is before all the principal means to arrive at the knowledge of one's vocation. Novices therefore should not only assiduously beg of God light to know His holy will in their behalf, but they should also practice their devotions, undertake their mortifications and go to Holy Communion with the same end in view.

(b) The knowledge of their vocation is made easier to the novices by their being confronted in the novitiate with the difficulties of the religious state and with the nature of its obligations, as well as with its spiritual advantages, and as they have begun to lead the life of a devout religious, they can easily judge whether or not that life suits their taste and inclinations, and whether they may hope to find in it, with the aid of God's grace, the peace of soul that surpasses all worldly enjoyments, as well as their sanctification, which insures a bright crown of glory in the next world.

(c) The best and most certain means for novices to ascertain their vocation is to consult their legitimate superiors and to follow their decision; but as the justice and propriety of the superiors' decision depend on their knowledge of each individual novice, novices must make themselves known to those who must decide their calling. In matters relating to their exterior conduct novices should be known to the master or mistress of novices and to the local superior, but with regard to the secrets of their conscience, to their spiritual director or confessor only. The spiritual director, chosen by a novice with the approbation of the proper superior, may or may not be the ordinary confessor. Thus, the novices should disclose to the master or mistress of novices, or other local superior, their physical and intellectual capacity, their repugnance to this or that rule, their inclination or aversion to any particular novice with regard to his or her exterior conduct, the opposition, if any, of parents or guardians to their entrance into the order or institute, their means of support or the lack of it, which, in

case of sickness, might prevent their remaining in the novitiate and all similar things, the knowledge of which is or may become public; but to the confessor or director novices should make known their past conduct, their evil inclinations and dominant passion, their interior trials, the assaults of the evil one, the reasons or occasions, whether ordinary or extraordinary, which brought them to the novitiate, their fears, their hopes and the means by which they expect to remove the obstacles to a holy life, and in one word all that regards the state of their conscience.

Let novices bear in mind that their temporal and spiritual welfare depends on their vocation, that they should not desire to become members of a religious community, unless it be God's will and that therefore, they should be as solicitous as their superiors to know God's designs in their behalf. Fraud and deceit, if it would help them to be received into any order or congregation, could only bring the malediction of God upon them and tend to their unhappiness here and hereafter.

III. The third advantage of the novitiate consists in that it prepares novices for the active duties for which the order or congregation has been founded, for the study and practice of those duties will render future religious more useful to their neighbor and to the institute as well. This applies mainly to the active religious orders or congregations, whose secondary end is the temporal and spiritual welfare of our neighbor through spiritual and temporal works of mercy.

Let us take for example the congregations of men and women, whose secondary end is the education of youth. What learning is required nowadays to compete with the godless schools, in order that the pupils, who in Catholic schools receive a Christian education, may not fall behind in the branches that tend to make them useful members of our modern society, and may enable them to occupy with honor and dignity their place in the world, and even to excel others of their own condition and rank.

Christian educators of both sexes are well aware that education consists in developing the physical, intellectual and moral faculties of youths, and that there can be no morality without religion. Now all these must be combined

in Catholic schools, and nevertheless the branches of ordinary and superior knowledge must not be neglected nor suffer by their combination with the study of religion, morality, Bible history and the history of the Church. The task is not an easy one, and hence we see how necessary it is that novices should acquire during their novitiate all necessary and useful learning, thereby to become more proficient in imparting all requisite knowledge to their pupils. With those two motives in view, novices will apply themselves with assiduity to the studies proposed to them, but with purity of intention, eschewing that vanity which is often but too much in evidence among educators.

As for the novices who have no aptitude for serious studies and no inclination to teach, let them learn as much as they can, for even a little learning helps wonderfully to properly undertake other charges in a religious community.

These remarks are not applicable to the institutes, approved by the Holy See, whose constitutions admit only of one year's novitiate, for during this short probation novices are strictly forbidden to dedicate themselves to secular studies, but the novitiate of one continuous year must be solely employed by the aspirants to the religious state in the formation of their character, in the study of the constitutions and rules of their institute, in prayer, in mortifying their intellectual and sensual appetites, in the practice of the virtues, especially those regarding the three religious vows, and in correcting their defects and imperfections. (Normae.)

May this short introduction, mainly intended for novices, animate them to enter upon the study and practice of perfection with a lively interest, but solely from the motive of pleasing God, Who wills the sanctification of their souls and has destined for them as a reward a bright crown of eternal glory.

The following ejaculatory prayer will, I hope, correspond to the sentiments of the novices who read this instruction:

Blessed be the most holy and indivisible Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, three persons in one God, by whom I am called to this novitiate to learn the science of the saints. Amen.

Excerpta from the New Code of Canon Law Regarding Novitiates and Religious Professions.

Note:—The provisions of the Code became obligatory on Pentecost day of the year 1918. The enactments have no retroactive effect and what was done validly before that date is not affected by the new Code.

We offer first the explanation of a few terms for the better understanding of the decrees of the Code.

Religious profession herein explained, consists in this, that eligible persons make the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, and that the legitimate superiors of religious congregations, institutes or orders accept them in the name of the Church.

In a wide sense the name of Religious Order may be applied to any religious institute or congregation, but, in a stricter sense, Religious Orders are those institutes with solemn vows, and the male religious of such orders are then usually called regulars or monks, especially if the rules of the "closed cloister" or "clausura" are observed in their monasteries. Likewise, in a strict sense, we call nuns the sisters with solemn vows, who are cloistered by the constitutions of their order.

Vows are either perpetual, that is for life, or temporary, that is for a stated and definite time. They are either solemn or simple, according to the will of the Church, which ordains that the vows taken in some religious orders be recognized as solemn and the vows taken in other religious congregations or institutes be recognized as simple vows only. Solemn vows are necessarily perpetual. Simple and solemn vows are equally binding, but the latter are more easily dispensed from and, besides, the acts contrary to solemn vows are void as well as illicit. Example: If a person with simple vows embraces the matrimonial state, the marriage although illicit and sacrilegious is, as a general rule, valid before the Church, provided there be no other diriment impediment, which of itself would invalidate the marriage; but if one of the parties to the same marriage has made solemn vows, the marriage is, besides, null and void.

Novitiate.

The following are prevented from entering the novitiate and their entrance would make both the novitiate and the subsequent profession null and void:

1. Those who have once belonged to a non-Catholic sect. This affects only Catholics who have denied their faith and have joined a sect.

2. Those who enter religion through compulsion, grave fear or fraud. This affects likewise superiors who admit novices under like circumstances.

3. Married persons whose consort is still alive. It would not affect persons who have contracted an invalid marriage.

4. All those who have ever belonged to any other religious congregation or institute, in which they made their profession; and this holds good even if they have been dispensed from their vows; for the dispensation does not necessarily include the permission to enter the novitiate of another institute. If they only entered the novitiate of any religious congregation, institute or order they would not be debarred from entering into the novitiate of another religious community.

5. Those who are liable to be punished for a crime that is or may become public and of which they may be accused.

6. A cleric who in accordance with the statutes of the Holy See has promised under oath to work for his diocese or mission until his obligations have ceased.

7. A bishop as soon as he has been appointed by the Roman Pontiff, even if he be not yet consecrated.

8. Those under fifteen years of age.

Let us remark that no particular age is required for the postulate, but as in institutes with perpetual vows six months of postulate for all women and lay brothers are required, the last six months of the postulate should not begin sooner than six months before the postulants reach fifteen years of age.

Other Statutes That Regard the Novitiate.

In all institutes with perpetual vows, all women and lay-brothers must pass a postulate of six months before entering the novitiate. Nothing prevents a religious institute

from having a longer time of probation for their postulants.

The novitiate must last a full and uninterrupted year. If the constitutions of any religious congregation, institute or order require more than one full year of novitiate, the last year only is required for the validity of the novitiate, unless the constitutions expressly declare otherwise. In the following cases the novitiate is interrupted and has to be commenced anew:

(a) If one leaves the novitiate house after being dismissed. If the novice remains in the house to await the confirmation of the dismissal, in which an appeal to a superior authority was allowed, the novitiate would not be interrupted.

(b) The novitiate is interrupted if one leave without permission and with the intention of not returning.

(c) It is interrupted if one leave with or without permission for more than thirty days in all, that is, whether the thirty days are consecutive or not.

(d) It is not interrupted by the necessary absence of a novice which extends over fifteen days, but not more than thirty days, and in that case, in order to make the novitiate valid, the novice must make up for the lost time; but if the absence did not exceed fifteen days, the superior may still demand that the novice supply the deficiency in the year's novitiate. Nevertheless this is not necessary for the validity of the novitiate.

(e) A place must be set apart for the novitiate, and two novitiates in the same province cannot be erected without a special permission from the Holy See.

Decrees Regarding the Profession.

1. As compulsion, great fear and fraud invalidate the novitiate, with more reason is the profession invalidated on account of either of them.

2. The profession must be explicit, that is, it cannot be tacit or presumed from acts or circumstances or certain indices. Therefore, religious profession, since the proper superiors of the different communities must accept the profession, should be expressed in words, or in writing, or

by signs equivalent thereto, so that the intention of the aspirant to the religious life may be fully understood.

3. The profession must be made in the presence of the legitimate authorities according to the constitutions of each institute.

4. The perpetual profession must be preceded by three years of temporary vows. These temporary vows must be renewed yearly for three years, if the constitutions require it.

5. As said before, the age of sixteen is required for the making of temporary vows, but for the perpetual vows the age of twenty-one is required. The Code places no limit to the age above which the profession would become invalid.

If after three years of temporary vows the candidate for the perpetual vows has not yet reached twenty-one years, the temporary vows must be renewed until the professed religious with temporary vows completes his or her twenty-first year; and if the constitution require the yearly renewal of the vows, this should be observed until the professed religious reaches the requisite age.

6. The renewal of the vows should be done without delay as soon as the time for which the vows were made has expired, but the proper superiors may, for a just cause, anticipate the renewal by a time which should not exceed one month.

7. The professed religious with temporary vows enjoy all the privileges, indulgences and other spiritual benefits enjoyed by the religious of their institute who have made their perpetual profession, whether simple or solemn. They are likewise entitled to the same suffrages, if death should intervene before their perpetual profession.

They are also bound to observe the same rules and constitutions, but in religious orders or institutes in which the obligation of the choir exists, they are not bound to say the office privately, unless they have received Holy Orders or the constitutions of their institute expressly prescribe it.

They are deprived of the active and passive voice or vote, that is they have no right to vote nor are they eligible for offices depending on the suffrages of their co-religious, unless

otherwise provided in their constitutions; and in case these prescribe a certain time for the privilege of the active and passive vote and such time is not further determined by the constitutions, the time is to be reckoned from the first temporary profession. Thus, the constitutions of any religious order must determine what members are entitled to a passive or active vote. If they are silent on the subject the privilege is conferred only on the members who have made their perpetual profession; but if a time—at which the privilege of the active or passive vote is acquired—is set down in the constitutions and nothing further is determined, the prescribed time must be reckoned from the first temporary profession. Hence, if the constitutions only prescribe that religious shall enjoy the active and passive vote as soon as they have been professed three years, those who have made their first profession between their sixteenth and seventeenth year of age, would enjoy the privilege of the active and passive voice before they can make their perpetual profession.

Decrees of the Code Regarding the Property of Novices and Professed Religious in Institutes with Simple Vows, whether Perpetual or Temporary.

1. The Code of Canon Law prescribes that novices of all institutes with simple or solemn vows, with temporary or perpetual vows, before making their profession of simple vows, must make a provision to be in force as long as they remain with simple vows, by which they give over the administration of their property to a person of their choice, and they must likewise freely cede the use and usufruct of their goods, unless the constitutions forbid it.

2. If such provision was not made during the novitiate for the lack of property or of a good title to it, or new property comes to former novices after the novitiate is over, the same provision must be made as in the preceding paragraph.

3. Before making their temporary profession, novices should dispose by will of the property they actually own or of what may come to them by whatever title.

Note:—The Code is silent on the case in which novices, through oversight or neglect, or because the constitutions of their institute did not require it, omitted to make a will. Can they now make a will? Can they make it without having recourse to the Sacred Congregation of Religious? Are they bound to make a will?.... It seems certain that they who were not bound to make a will by the constitutions of their order, before their first profession, are not obliged to make a will now because of the enactments of the new Canon Law, for as we have stated, the enactments of the Code are not retroactive. If their constitutions required of them to make a will and they neglected to do so, they are bound to make it even after their profession but only after obtaining permission of the Holy See. They are obliged to ask the authorization to make their will for the following reasons: first, all religious by their vow of poverty are forbidden to exercise any right of ownership regarding their property, except in the case when their title to their property was not settled and when new property has come to them after making their first vows, and secondly, because in all institutes lately approved by the Holy See, it is provided that the religious with temporary or perpetual vows shall neither make nor change their will without leave of the Holy See. Nevertheless in an urgent case, the religious of whom there is question, have the right to change their will with the permission of their superior general or provincial superior, and therefore they may also make a new will. We would advise all religious to make a will, if they have not done so, but they should first have recourse to the Sacred Congregation of Religious. Nevertheless, it is to be hoped that the Holy See will grant to all religious by general rescript, at least for a time, the right to make a will without having recourse to the Holy See, if for some reason they have not done it before their first vows.

Note:—We pass in this introduction many things that regard the orders with solemn vows for the reason of the special privilege and exemption enjoyed by many of those religious orders.

Other Remarks Regarding the Property of Novices and Religious of Simple Vows.

1. The professed of simple vows in religious institutes or congregations are forbidden:

(a) To dispose of their property by gift or donation *inter vivos,* that is to take effect before their death and in favor of the living.

(b) To change in any way their will made during their novitiate or any time before their profession, without the permission of the Holy See. Nevertheless in urgent cases, when there is no time for recourse to the Holy See, the permission of one of the higher superiors, such as the superior general or provincial superior is sufficient, and if they cannot be reached, the permission of the local superior is sufficient.

The purpose of the preceding enactment of the new Canon Law is clear. Novices and the professed of simple vows retain the dominion or ownership of their property, but they can dispose of it by will as they see fit. Nevertheless this is not even allowed them, after their temporary profession, without leave of the Holy See.

(c) During the novitiate, novices must appoint an administrator of their property and dispose of their revenues, and after their simple vows they may change those dispositions, but not without the permission of the superior general or, in case of nuns, without permission of the Ordinary, unless their constitutions allow it. Besides, if the change be in favor of their own institute, they are forbidden to make it even with the permission of their superiors, provided the change involves a considerable portion of the property—about one-third or at most one-half of the property would be considered a considerable portion of the income.

(d) If professed religious of simple vows leave their institute or congregation they re-enter immediately in all their rights, both as regard the administration and the income of their property; and the Code advises that the renunciation of the administration and income of their property and other like dispositions should be made upon

the express condition that they may enter upon the administration of their property and enjoy the income thereof as soon as they leave the order.

Religious profession if null and void, how shall it be made valid?

1. If a religious profession be void because of an external impediment, it cannot be made valid by the Apostolic See, and if the nullity be known and the impediment removed, a new profession must take place.

2. If on the contrary, the profession be void by reason of lack of interior consent, by renewing the consent the profession is made valid, provided that from the part of the religious order or institute the consent has not been revoked.

Manual of Christian Perfection

PART I

ARTICLE I

In What Perfection Consists

Absolute Perfection Belongs to the Elect—Perfection is Charity—What Virtues Are—What is Understood by the Perfection to Which We All Should Tend—Three Degrees of Perfection—Division of This Work.

I. Ever since the sin of Adam and Eve, absolute perfection is not of this world, for as man is beset with many enemies and his nature is corrupted by original sin, it is impossible that one can remain so pure that his soul will never be stained by the smallest venial sin; we must except nevertheless, the Blessed Virgin, who was preserved from original sin, and from any and all imperfections. This is the doctrine of the Council of Trent,[1] which anathematizes those who hold the contrary doctrine. The Council of Vienne in France, held under Clement V in 1311, had already condemned the heretics, who taught that man can arrive at such a degree of perfection that he is incapable of sinning and is unable to advance in virtue.

Absolute and complete perfection belongs only to the elect, who see God face to face, but the inhabitants of this sublunary world only know God imperfectly and only know Him through His teachings and His works, which is not sufficient to enkindle in their hearts the ardent fire of divine love that consumes all earthly love, and moreover, the vile and abject occupations of man prevent him from contemplating God like the blessed spirits in Heaven, who without ceasing are occupied in the sight and enjoyment of His infinite perfection.

[1] Sess. 6, Can. 23.

II. St. Thomas teaches without the least hesitation that the essence of Christian perfection consists primarily in the love of God, and secondarily, in the love of neighbor for God's sake.[2] There is then a perfection that we can attain in this world, a true perfection, which is a perfection according to man's nature, aided by God's grace, and it is this perfection or charity to which we should all aspire according to the words of St. Paul: "Have before all charity which is the bond of perfection," [3] as if he said, strive to possess the virtue of charity, which unites all the virtues into one homogeneous whole, and in that, perfection consists. Again the same Apostle says: "Love therefore is the fulfilling of the law," [4] for he that loves God and his neighbor fulfills all that God has commanded, according to the Savior's words: "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God . . . and thy neighbor as thyself. On these two Commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets." [5]

Again perfection consists in charity, because when man arrives at his end, the end for which he was created, he is in the state of perfection; but charity unites us to God, Who is our end, and therefore, it is in charity that our perfection must consist.[6] The union between God and man is only consummated in Heaven; but in this world we are united to God by faith and hope, but mainly and most intimately by that love which makes us conform all other actions, yea, our whole being to the will of God. Thus charity or the love of God unites us intimately to Him even here below.

We can easily understand why perfection demands that we should also love our neighbor, for as God Himself loves our neighbor, we are in closer union with God, if we love all those whom He loves, and thus, as St. Thomas teaches, it is by the same act that we love God and our neighbor, whom we love in God and for God.

If our whole perfection consists in the love of God and of our neighbor, what are the moral virtues and the evangelical counsels? These are, with other means of perfection, like prayer and the sacraments, indispensable; for by them man arrives at perfection. One act of virtue, one

[2] 2.2.q.184 a.3 c. [3] Gal. iii. 14. [4] Rom. xiii. 10.
[5] Matt. xxii. 37-40. [6] St. Thomas 2.2. q. 184 a.1.

Holy Communion, one act of the love of God is not charity in which perfection consists, but the habitual acts of all the virtues of our state of life, frequent acts of faith, hope and love, united to the means of grace, and repeated victories over our intellectual and sensual appetites bring us to that state of perfection in which true charity is to be found, or rather, which is charity.

III. As absolute and complete perfection is not of this world, to what perfection must we aspire or tend continually? It is clear that we must love God above all things in mind and heart and deed, for that love of God is absolutely necessary unto salvation, because by refusing that love to our Maker, we offer an insult to the Divine Majesty. There is also a supreme perfection which consists in a continual act of homage to and love of God, but this sublime perfection belongs solely to the elect, who see God face to face. Therefore he who does not possess it, does no injury to the Divine Majesty and commits no sin. Now between these two degrees of perfection, one absolutely necessary unto salvation and the other, unattainable in this life, there is a relative perfection, for which we should strive, and it consists in loving God and serving Him as much as our nature, composed of a dual substance, body and soul, will permit us. This relative perfection which we will call Christian perfection, because we find its perfect model in Christ our Savior, demands according to Suarez, purity of heart, a certain facility or readiness and promptitude of divers acts of charity and a like promptness and aptitude to avoid all that is contrary to the divine love, not excepting all imperfections that would diminish its fervor. But it is impossible to arrive at that degree of charity without the aid of other perfections, such as the dominion over our passions, self-denial and the renunciation of the world, the means of grace and the practice of the virtues belonging to our state of life.

IV. Forsooth, perfection is not the fruit of a few days of labor, especially for those who have recently abandoned the world and its pleasures, and therefore we will do well to follow the old teachers in the school of perfection, who divide their pupils into three classes: those that begin, those that advance and those that have arrived at perfection.

These three classes correspond to the three degrees of perfection to wit.: the *purgative,* the *illuminative* and the *unitive* state. Those of the first class strive mainly to detach themselves from the world, its pleasures and its vices, bearing in mind the words of Holy Scripture: "Love not the world nor the things that are in the world." The first degree is then the state of *purgation,* in which beginners renounce all that the world loves with its pernicious maxims and customs, and aim to purify themselves from the stains and guilt of sin, from their evil habits and from all sinful inclinations. The *illuminative* state is the state of those who belong to the second degree and who, having advanced even a little, have found in what the lovers of the world uphold as worthy of their best efforts, but disgust and contempt, and commence to be attracted to the service of God by the beauty of virtue, the peace it bestows here and the lasting happiness it procures in the next world. In this state, the aspirants to holiness have partly subdued their evil inclinations, but still find great difficulty in vanquishing them, and although they are not any longer guilty of mortal sin, they frequently commit deliberate venial sins. Finally to the *unitive* state belong all those that have arrived at a certain perfection and strive to climb still higher on the ladder whose summit reaches the very throne of God, and they are now determined to unite themselves to their Maker by seeking in all things His holy will. There is no limit to this perfection, for no matter how perfect one may be, he can still add to his perfection, daily and hourly, by any new meritorious thought or affection, word or deed.

As a further explanation of the three degrees, we will add that those who are in the state of grace, but preserve it with difficulty owing to their evil inclinations, and practice the virtues of their state of life with repugnance, although they have a desire to live a holy life, may be said to be beginners. They may still fall into many wilful venial sins and possibly into a mortal sin, of which they repent and which they confess without much delay.

Those who already have partly overcome their passions and sensual appetites and abstain without much trouble from mortal sin, but nevertheless still commit venial sins, and

although they practice the virtues with greater promptness and alacrity, still neglect many means of progress towards perfection, belong to the second degree.

Those finally who have vanquished the passions of the soul and the concupiscence of the flesh so that they are felt but rarely and are easily controlled, and who besides are no longer guilty of deliberate venial sin, but joyfully and promptly practice the virtues, especially those of charity, belong to the third degree.

From what has been said on charity or perfection, these three things are essentially necessary to that state, first, that they who have arrived at that state have overcome their passions, but by this should not be understood that the vicious intellectual and sensual appetites are totally dead and are not felt any longer, but that the passions of the soul and the concupiscence of the flesh seldom spring up, rise with less violence and are easily smothered; secondly, that they be free not only from mortal sin, but avoid even deliberate venial sins and shun their near occasions; and thirdly, that they unite themselves to God by acts of charity toward God and neighbor, promptly taking hold of any and all opportunities to conform themselves to the will of their Master.

Imperfections committed in the practice of the duties of our state of life, venial sins without full deliberation, that is venial sins without sufficient deliberation or free consent of the will, hinder our advancement to perfection, but do not deprive us of it. Still it is our duty, if we strive for holiness which is commanded by the Savior, when He says: "Be ye perfect as My Father in Heaven is perfect," to daily diminish the number of our imperfections and of our slightly deliberate venial sins. Let us conclude this paragraph with the words of St. Bernard: "Continual striving for perfection and the efforts made to arrive at it, are already perfection;" for the proper perfection of the present life consists in that, the movements of our passions are slow, calm and rare, and allow themselves to be easily overcome, that the soul does not commit venial sins with entire deliberation and that it promptly unites itself to God and makes great efforts to arrive at the perfection of that union by an entire conformity to His holy will.

V. It is the purpose of this Manual (a) to teach us the means of grace and the necessity of having frequent recourse to them: for in them we shall find all that is necessary for acquiring and maintaining the spiritual life of the soul or sanctifying grace, of which the first fruit is the beginning of charity and purity of intention in all our actions; (b) to lay before us the obstacles to perfection and the means to overcome them; (c) to teach us the nature of the moral virtues, their beauty and the practice of them, as well as our duty to avoid what is opposed to them, and (d) to show the pupil in the school of sanctity, that union with God is perfected through charity, which, to be ardent and fervent, must be accompanied by a lively faith and firm hope; for "Now there remain these three, faith, hope and charity, but the greatest of them is charity." Thus we see that this quadruple end we propose to ourselves in this Manual, divides the work into four parts.

ARTICLE II

The First Means of Perfection Is to Desire It

Summary—I. The First Means of Perfection is the Desire of It—Proofs—Means to Excite It—II. Means to Acquire the Desire of Perfection—III. Tepidity: Signs of and Remedy for It.

I. The life of a fervent Christian is but a holy desire, says St. Augustine, and the reason therefor is given by St. Thomas, when he teaches that "Desire in some manner makes one capable of receiving the good we desire." [1] Holy desires are nothing else than the emotions or affections of the soul towards a spiritual good which we do not yet possess, but which we hope to obtain; for what we possess already excites no longer any desire, but satisfaction and joy, whilst the good we cannot attain can only excite despair. The greater our desire to obtain a coveted good, the greater will be the will and the effort we employ to reach it, for fervent and sincere desire acts upon the inferior part of the soul by exciting in it ardent affections, and these affections react upon the will and strengthen it to employ greater efforts for the possession of the longed-for good. Desires in some manner expand the heart and enlarge the soul to contain the greater good which we hope for. Perfection is a great spiritual good and, as a vessel must be sufficiently large to contain the liquid we wish to pour into it, likewise our soul must be proportionately enlarged by holy and ardent desires and be increased in capacity to receive the great gifts which God only grants to those who desire and strive for them. This truth is more easily felt than explained, but we are all conscious that without an ardent desire for a spiritual favor, our will remains inert, and like a man chilled and benumbed by cold, we are incapable of advancing.

To excite in us a great desire of perfection we need only to consider the obligation imposed on us to tend towards it. St. Paul proclaims the necessity of being perfect, for, to the Ephesians he writes: "Therefore take unto you the armor of God, that you may stand in all things perfect." [2]

[1] 1 q.12 a.6.

[2] Eph. vi. 13.

II. The obligation of tending to perfection applies to lay people, as well as to religious, but in a different manner and degree. Let us begin with the perfection required for all lay people.

(a) Lay people often wrongly imagine that perfection is good only for religious, and that as a consequence, all that is expected of laics is that they observe in a general way the commandments of God and of His Church. Many indeed mock and deride the devout layman who does more than keep from shameful vices, which might deserve the reprobation of ordinary Christians, and they contemptuously ridicule as devotees or bigots those who despise the pomps and vanities of the world, maintain reserve and modesty in their conversation and manners, and practice devotions which are not imposed under pain of mortal sin.

St. Thomas clearly explains the necessity for all Christians to tend towards perfection as follows: "All religious as well as seculars are obliged in some manner to do all the good they can, for to all in common it is said: 'Whatever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly.'" [3] Nevertheless there is a way of fulfilling the precept, which consists in doing what one should do according to his condition or state of life, provided there be no contempt for not choosing what is best;[4] for contempt of religious practices not strictly enjoined firmly withholds the soul from all spiritual advancement, according to the Angelic Doctor. That lay people are also bound to strive for Christian perfection, is clearly laid down in Holy Scripture. Our Savior Himself when imposing upon everyone the duty to deny himself, to renounce the world and to take up the cross and follow Him, as well as to forgive his enemies, concluded by saying: "Be ye therefore perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect." [5] St. Augustine, commenting on the words of Our Lord, says that "We should not imagine that the words of Jesus Christ should be received only by virgins and not by married people, by widows and not by those who have still husbands, by religious and not by lay people. The whole Church must

[3] Eccle. ix. 10. [4] 2.2 q.186 a.2 to 2.
[5] Matt. v. 48.

follow Jesus Christ." St. James [6] and St. Peter [7] teach the same doctrine as their Master.[8] All the commentators on the Savior's words agree that every Christian is bound to tend towards perfection, although not all are bound to observe the evangelical counsels; but they must tend to Christian perfection according to their state of life, and by this is meant that they are in duty bound to be perfect as far as they can by diligently complying with all the duties of their condition, as parent, children, married people, single men or women. If we are asked what sin a lay person commits who does not strive for a perfect Christian life, we should answer that, unless he acts through contempt, he only commits a venial sin; but if he has an habitual intention never to do anything more than to observe the precepts which bind under pain of mortal sin, he will surely fall into mortal sin, for he that habitually thinks little of venial transgressions, will soon fall into grievous sins, and thus he exposes his eternal salvation to the danger of losing it.

(b) We now come to the obligation of religious to tend towards perfection. St. Thomas teaches that religious who do not aspire to perfection commit a mortal sin and we should add that religious men and women live in the state of sin, if they habitually neglect to advance in virtue and sanctity. "The religious state," says the Angelic Doctor, "is a discipline (apprenticeship), an exercise that leads souls to perfection, towards which we tend by different means, as in medicine different remedies are employed to give health to the sick. Now, it is evident that he who proposes to arrive at a certain end, need not have attained it, but he must tend to it with all his strength. Likewise, he who enters the religious state, is not bound to possess perfect charity, but he must desire it and make efforts to attain it." [9] Nothing can be clearer than the principle laid down by the eminent Doctor of the Church. From the moment novices enter the novitiate, they are like apprentices who learn their trade or art, and from that moment they must strive for the state of perfection. Perfection is not even demanded of them when they are admitted to their vows, but after making their vows,

[6] James i.
[7] 1 Peter i.
[8] *Cfr.* A Lapide on Matt. v. 48.
[9] 2.2. q.186 a.2.

then more than before are they bound to use their best efforts to arrive at perfection; for, having obligated themselves by the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, they must keep their vows under pain of mortal sin. It is true they do not sin grievously by a transgression of the rules which do not bind under pain of sin, unless the act of transgression be accompanied with a contempt of the rules and constitutions of their order or institute; but, according to many theologians, an habitual neglect of the rule can hardly be free from venial sin: because of the three vows which constitute the perfection of religious life, the vow of obedience is the most eminent and, owing to the slight or futile reasons given for failing to observe the rules, the transgression is usually accompanied by a slight contempt of them, which constitutes a venial sin.

Let us remark here, that when religious make the vow of obedience, they do not vow to observe every rule, for they make only the vow to lead a regular life consisting in the three vows; but if the superior of a house or community for grave reasons commands by virtue of holy obedience, and clearly signifies the fact, a disobedience to such a command constitutes a mortal sin. St. Thomas explains how religious may sin mortally by contempt in the transgressions of their rules: "One sins by contempt," says the Angelic Doctor, "when his will refuses to be subject to any precept of the law or rule, and because of such disposition, he determines to act contrary to the commandment or rules. When on the contrary, one is induced to act contrary to the statutes or the law or rule for any other particular cause, *e. g.*, through concupiscence or anger, then he does not sin through contempt but for another cause, and this is true even if he would sin frequently through that cause or a similar one. . . . Nevertheless the frequency of sinning disposes and leads to contempt." [10]

We may also add that as religious are bound to strive towards perfection, the strict observance of the rules together with the keeping of the vows are a great means to advance in sanctity and holiness, and they who neglect the means of advancing, can have but scant regard for the per-

[10] 2.2. q.186 a.9 to 3.

fection to which all human beings, laymen as well as religious, must tend.

II. Let us now examine the means to acquire the desire of perfection. Before we consider the means by which the desire of perfection is engendered and fostered in our hearts, let us observe that, since "Charity can always increase, for its increase has no limits in this life," [11] our desire of perfection should never cease, but should be constantly renewed and gain in intensity every day and every hour of our life. Perfection consists in our union with God, but there are many degrees in that union. The steps leading to the summit of perfection, where God dwells, are truly infinite in number. If we could live as long as Mathusala and could advance one step every day, we still could ascend higher and higher when we come to the termination of that long life, and our charity could still increase in ardor until the soul, like that of the Blessed Virgin, bursting the slender thread which ties it to earth, takes its flight into the bosom of the Infinite God. "He that is just let him be justified still, and he that is holy, let him be sanctified still," says St. John,[12] and why? Because to a greater sanctity a greater glory is due on the day of retribution, and also because no one can stand still; if he does not advance, he retrogrades, for nothing stands still in this world, and the going down on the ladder of perfection is often sudden and the fall precipitate. Therefore, fear of falling back should suffice to animate us to climb higher and higher. Let us at least learn from the successful business man of this world to excite in us such a longing desire to store up riches for heaven, as he does to pile up a fortune he will never fully enjoy and the scant enjoyment of which is at best of short duration.

(a) The first means to increase the desire of perfection is the meditation upon the eternal truths concerning our salvation and the infinite perfections of God. The Holy Ghost can instill salutary thoughts into our mind at all times, and supernatural light may illumine our intellect that will be the beginning of salvation, if we allow ourselves to be guided by it and if we co-operate with it; but man aided from on high must spur himself on to holy determination and lofty

[11] St. Thomas 2.2. q.24 a.7. [12] Ap. xxii. 11.

deeds by meditation: "In my meditation," says the Royal Prophet, "a flame shall flame out. I spoke with my tongue: O Lord, make me know my end." [13] Thus in meditation the heart is moved, holy desires spring up and move the will to effectually tend towards our spiritual advancement, and as by past experience and the teachings of our Savior, we are thoroughly convinced that without Him we can do nothing and with Him we can do all things, we unite to mental prayer or meditation humble vocal prayers, which are sure to be heard, because holiness honors God as well as ourselves, and God demands it of us.

(b) The second means to excite in us the desire of perfection is to practice the good works which are not strictly commanded, but which are of counsel only. Many Christians, religious and lay people, erroneously hold that to save their souls, there is no need of striving for perfection. They have been taught, they aver, that he who dies in the grace of God is sure of his salvation. This doctrine, although true, is deceiving and fallacious: it rests upon the belief that one can during his life remain in the state of grace, in all security, without taking the means to preserve it. He who only intends to keep the commandments that obligate under pain of mortal sin, commits numerous venial sins, and these weaken the soul and dispose it to fall into mortal sin. "It is morally impossible," says Suarez, "that one can keep the firm purpose never to commit a mortal sin, unless he perform works of supererogation and make at least the virtual resolution to have always recourse to them." [14] The reason therefor is easily found: since venial sin diminishes the supernatural life of the soul, what will replace the lost strength of the soul? Nothing else than the frequent use of the means of grace: prayer, the reception of the sacraments, the hearing of Mass, the special devotions to the sacred humanity of Our Lord, to the Blessed Virgin, the angels and the saints, as well as mortifications of the flesh, the practice of the virtues which are counseled only and are not strictly enjoined under pain of sin, and acts of charity towards our neighbor. Let us admit that the observance of our serious obligations, such as abstinence from flesh-

[13] Ps. xxxviii. 4, 5. [14] Tom. 4 de Rel., L. 1; c. 4, n. 12.

meats on Fridays and the hearing of Mass on Sundays and on other days of obligation increase sanctifying grace; but often the merits of those observances are lost, wholly or in part, on the same day they are gained, through wilful venial sins, and during the interval before other pious work of obligation have been complied with, the soul has often lost its power to resist its evil passions and the concupiscence of the flesh, and thus falls into grievous sin.

It must also be said that "He that condemneth small things shall fall by little and little," [15] because as St. Thomas well remarks: "He that often commits venial sins transgresses a certain law, and as he accustoms his will to transgress it in little things, he is disposed to transgress it in things that concern his last end by committing a mortal sin." [16] No one better than the sinner knows by sad experience how gradually he has fallen from small transgressions into degrading vices.

(c) A third expedient consists in renewing frequently the holy determination to advance in perfection by all the means placed at our disposal by our bountiful Father. The means are those of grace, such as vocal and mental prayer, the sacraments and religious devotions; also mortifications and the practice of the virtues, including the evangelical counsels. We must follow the example of David: "And I said, now have I begun," [17] that is, we must always begin and begin anew, no matter how rapid may have been our advancement and how long we may have walked in the way of perfection. It is with these sentiments that St. Anthony, in his last moments, according to St. Athanasius, finished his discourse to his religious: "Renew and mortify," he said, "your fervor as if you began from today only, the work of your perfection." [18]

(d) A fourth means is not to think of the good we have already done, but of the good we still have to do and of the virtues we still must acquire, and this is the more necessary, because these dispositions are a sign of perfection, according to St. Bernard. This means is taught us by St. Paul. Having stated that he is not yet perfect, he says: "One

[15] Eccli. xix. 1.
[16] 1.2 q.88 a.3.
[17] Ps. lxxvi. 11.
[18] St. Athan., Life of St. Ant.

thing I do: forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark, to the prize of the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus. Let us, therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded." [19]

One who runs towards a goal, looks always ahead for fear of meeting an obstacle he should avoid, and "No man who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." [20] If we sometimes do look back, it should not be with the view of considering the good we have done, for that good is insignificant compared to the good we are still called to attempt in our advance, but we should in our retrospect consider mainly the sins of our past life, which should overwhelm us with confusion and draw tears of remorse from the heart, and secondly, we should try to review our efforts in the way towards perfection and strive to detect in them the errors and faults we have committed, and lay the proper plans to avoid like mistakes in the future. Before all, humility must accompany such an examination, and if we do not spare ourselves, and if vainglory is excluded from it, we shall always find reason to be dissatisfied with ourselves, and this is indeed very useful if we wish to advance steadily. "What you are now," says St. Augustine, "should always displease you, if you wish to become what you are not," that is truly perfect, or more perfect than you are now.

III. *Tepidity.* All Catholics of whatever condition should fully understand the necessity of the desire for Christian perfection, and the obligation to employ the means to acquire it and to preserve it. Unhappily the first fervor of those who have determined to tend towards holiness is not always maintained, and what is more regrettable is, that tepidity, which carries one on the downgrade to carelessness and absolute indifference, is not always noticeable; and when otherwise well disposed religious or devout men become conscious of it, it may plunge them into disappointment and despondency, which will prevent them from seeking to emerge from their sad state, and this is likely to cause disgust for their religious practices.

[19] Phil. iii. 13, 14, 15. [20] Luke ix. 62.

What is to be done when a well-meaning Christian perceives that his former zeal for advancement in holiness is lost, and circumstances prevent him from having recourse to a wise and pious counsellor?

1. Disgust for spiritual devotions is ordinarily a sign of tepidity, a sad and dangerous state to which St. John refers, when he introduces the Spirit of God, Who condemns the works of the Church of Laodicea in the following words: "I know thy works, that they are neither cold nor hot. I would that thou wert cold or hot, but because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth." [21] In tepidity the will becomes as it were benumbed; it languishes in its torpor and the former devout Christian omits his meditations, his devotions, his good works of supererogation, or thinks himself dispensed from them for futile reasons, or if he complies exteriorly with his obligations, he does it more through respect for others than from a sense of duty; he neglects his examinations of conscience or makes them cursorily and without purpose of amendment; if he approaches the sacraments, it is without serious preparation and therefore he receives no fruit from their reception. Tepidity hardens the heart and makes one indifferent to all the inspirations of the Holy Ghost and thus the tepid man makes no effort to extricate himself from his perilous state.

2. We said that disgust for spiritual devotions is ordinarily a sign of lukewarmness or tepidity, but there is an aridity that also causes disgust and repugnance for spiritual exercises, and notwithstanding it may be a trial by which a bountiful God seeks to reward by His choicest favors faithful and tried souls and to animate them to a greater perfection. This aridity, willed or permitted as a trial by God, is easily distinguished from common tepidity. For in the former, the soul laments its condition, because it feels less fervor in God's service and it would gladly enkindle within itself the fire of divine love, yea it would set the whole world on fire to compensate for its coldness, indifference and lack of fervor. This state of aridity is free from blame notwithstanding that the soul thus tried finds no consolation or

[21] Ap. iii. 15, 16.

unction in its pious exercises, and it often leads to great sanctity, whilst tepidity that comes from neglect of duty, borders on impiety, merits God's displeasure and often leads to indifference and hardness of heart.

3. Another means by which lukewarmness is detected besides the disgust of spiritual exercises, is that lukewarm religious or lay persons are easily satisfied with themselves and with their pious efforts, provided they have not omitted any duty that obligated under pain of sin, and therefore they make no attempt to amend their careless life. Pure-minded and fervent Christians, on the contrary, are never satisfied with the good they have done, but always regret and lament that they have done so little good, and thus they bemoan their imperfection and despise themselves, in the consciousness of having failed to correspond to the graces of God and to heed the many inspirations of the Holy Ghost. The most fervent among them will see in their shortcomings, the necessity of mortifying their intellectual and sensual appetites, and of spurring themselves on by a greater watchfulness in accomplishing in all things the divine will.

The devout Christian must nevertheless be on his guard against discouragement and dejection inseparable from the loss of peace of mind, for these—although that may seem at first sight contradictory—spring often from pride, the pride of the soul that is humiliated through its want of fervor, feeling, as it were, hurt and disappointed because it considered itself proof against all unfaithfulness in the service of God. Humility, or the consciousness that without God we can do nothing, and that without His supernatural aid we would soon fall into the most degrading vices, will effectually cure the soul of that diabolical pride.

Repugnance to the observance of our religious exercises is taken by many as a sufficient excuse to omit them, as if such repugnance to, and disgust for pious practices were unsurmountable obstacles in their way and not due to their negligence and tepidity. Disgust for religious exercises can be overcome provided one resumes his former fervor, which is obtained as we have said, by fidelity to one's duties and by pious works of supererogation.

4. Another sign of tepidity is found in the exterior con-

duct of those religious who formerly loved solitude and recollection, and found in their ordinary occupation their consolation and happiness, but now seek distraction and useless dissipation in lengthy and intimate conversations on worldly topics and current news, or wherein others are criticized or ridiculed. This observation may also be applied to the people of the world who have abandoned their former pious practices to give themselves up to all kinds of worldly amusements, which their state of life does not demand.

5. When sincere religious and pious laymen are aware that their former fervor in religious practices has perceptibly diminished or feel the first evidence of tepidity, they can do nothing better than to return to the means by which they enkindled in their breast the first desire of Christian perfection, such as serious and practical meditations on the uncertainty of life, on death, judgment and the happiness of heaven; on the sufferings of the reprobate and on the severe justice of God, who demands satisfaction for the slightest transgression of His law. They should have recourse to frequent and fervent Communions, preceded by a humble confession of all their shortcomings; also to the mortification of the intellectual and sensual appetites and prompt return to the observance of the rules of their order or institute if they be religious, or if they be lay people, to the rule of life they had formerly adopted, when they began to strive for holiness and sanctity; and finally, they should firmly determine to comply in the most perfect manner with all the duties of their state of life and to perform divers works of supererogation, especially those of mercy towards their neighbor.

One of the most practical and effectual means to avoid the danger of tepidity is the choice of a director, the consideration of which is the subject of the next article.

ARTICLE III

The Second Means of Perfection Consists in Being Under the Guidance of a Good Director

Necessity of a Good Director—Reasons Therefor—Qualities of a Good Director—Confidence We Should Have in Our Director.

I. We have examples in Holy Scripture and in the lives of the saints in which God took upon Himself the direction of some favorite souls on the road to holiness, to make them worthy instruments of His bountiful designs upon His children upon earth. Among them the great prophet and legislator, Moses. This holy and wise man, full of zeal for the honor and glory of his Maker, was chosen to be the teacher and leader of the Israelites, although he was not a pupil of any human school of sanctity, or of one who laid claim to a knowledge of things divine. St. John the Baptist received his learning in his early youth from his father, Zachary, but owed all his instructions relating to his future conduct to the inspirations from Heaven. St. Paul was called and converted in the midst of his dreams of persecution against the Christians by Jesus of Nazareth Himself, but the divine Master sent him to Ananias, a disciple at Damascus, to be instructed in all that regards the Christian religion.[1] Why did God not instruct St. Paul as He had Moses, St. John the Baptist, and almost all of the prophets of the Old Law? For no other reason, as some writers on spiritual life remark, than that, at the time of St. Paul, there were to be found ministers of the New Law who could assume the charge of directing the souls of those who aspired to Christian perfection, and therefore the Apostle of the Gentiles and we, after him, are bound to place ourselves under their guidance. God will not refuse to direct by His salutary inspirations those who have no opportunity to seek the guidance of

[1] Acts ix. 10.

His wise and saintly ministers, but when these can be found, it would be temerity to refuse their direction and to rely upon a direct intervention from Heaven.

II. The masters of spiritual life have frequently urged upon their disciples the necessity, or, at least, the great advantage of a director of conscience for all those who desire to make great progress, if such a director can be found. "When you have overcome the first difficulty," says St. Basil, "choose with the greatest prudence and after a most rigorous examination, a man whom you can follow as your guide in the kind of life you have adopted," that is, whether it be the sacerdotal state, religious state, the married state or the state of celibacy. Thus St. Basil maintains that as soon as any one begins to aspire to holiness, his first duty is to remove the first obstacles incompatible with Christian perfection—for these are the first difficulties to be overcome, referred to by St. Basil—and this done, he should choose a wise and learned director to guide him in all the dangers, doubts and perplexities he may encounter, without fear of going astray. In many of his letters addressed to those who strove for Christian perfection, St. Jerome insists in inculcating the necessity of choosing a director, alleging therefore that they should guard against presumption, the most dangerous guide that can be followed. The danger of presumption is tersely expressed and forcibly confirmed by St. Bernard, when he says that: "He who wills to be his own master, becomes the disciple of a fool." [2] St. Vincent Ferrer resumes in a few words the whole truth in this important matter: "Jesus Christ without Whom we can do nothing," he writes, "will never bestow His graces on a soul, who, having the opportunity of being guided, rejects it. Obedience is the royal highway that leads men to the summit of perfection, where their God awaits them." [3]

III. If the choosing of a director of conscience has been found necessary, there must be grave reasons for it; let us examine them.

(a) The first reason is found in the conviction that no art, no science, not even a trade, can be learned without a master. This is admitted by all in practice and needs no

[2] Ep. lxxxvii. [3] Treatise on Spiritual Life.

further proof. This being so, how much more is a master or director required to teach the all-important and difficult science of the saints, on which our eternal welfare may depend.

(b) The second reason is that, when one is guided by a director, he is relieved from many doubts and perplexities regarding the course he must take in many difficult circumstances of his life. If anything is troubling you or causing anxiety, go to your director, expose your case and follow his advice. If success does not come up to your expectation, you have no reason to worry, you have done your duty.

(c) A third reason is, that it prevents many imprudences and excesses which often lead to many and irreparable faults. How many have undertaken rigorous fasts and painful mortifications by which they have ruined their health and rendered themselves incapable of complying with their ordinary duties, because they resorted to penances far above their power without consulting anyone other than their whimsical inclinations or perhaps the suggestions of Satan. Christian perfection is not attained in a day or a week: he who runs fast easily stumbles. Therefore those who are attracted by the beauty of holiness, must not become impatient, but should be willing to tend to it under a prudent and wise guide, eschewing haste and anxiety. Self-will is an insidious enemy, and one is never safe, if he relies solely upon his own wisdom, obscured by pride and thwarted by a spirit of self-sufficiency.

(d) A fourth reason is that without a sure guide it is impossible to escape the many ruses and temptations of the evil one. Those that aspire to Christian perfection are more than others attacked by the wiles of Satan, and in order to succeed, our wily enemy suggests before all things independence and contempt of wise counsels, knowing by the experience of many centuries that pride and confidence in one's own ability is the ruin of his spiritual progress.

Nevertheless, those who aspire to Christian perfection and cannot find anyone to guide them, either because there is no priest living in the near neighborhood, or, for good reasons, suppose him to be too young and inexperienced to properly direct them, should not be discouraged, God Him-

self will guide and direct them, provided they supplicate His aid in frequent and fervent prayer. God wills our sanctification and daily progress, and consequently He will not deny us the means to attain them both, even if it were necessary to detail an angel, another Raphael, to guide us through all the dangers that beset those who are forced to rely mainly upon their own prudence and efforts.

IV. The choice of a director is largely a matter of conscience. Our director should possess these three qualities: he should be upright and virtuous, be a man of learning and of experience.

(a) On the first quality we need only remark that a virtuous director alone can aspire to the proper direction of the conscience of others. The old adage: "*Medice cura te ipsum*" ("physician cure thyself"), is perfectly applicable to our subject. No one can cure the ailments of the souls of others until he has cured himself of the maladies inherent to his fallen nature, to wit.: the obstacles and the vices that impede the progress in virtue and the healthy, spiritual life of the soul. If he has not attained the Christian perfection of his state of life, he should at least strive for it by the practice of the virtues belonging to it, and above all he should be imbued with a more than ordinary zeal for the honor and glory of God and the salvation of souls. He should also have been a willing and humble disciple of a wise and holy director, from whom he has learned the guidance of himself and of others.

(b) The second quality of a proper director is sufficient learning or the knowledge of all that appertains to Christian perfection, that is, of its nature, of the means to acquire it, preserve and develop it, of the obstacles to be overcome and of the arms and implements with which one may successfully war against them. He should also be acquainted with the virtues and their practice, as infallible and indispensable instruments in the struggle for holiness. A good director should likewise understand how to guide beginners, those who have made progress and those who have entered the perfect life; for those that belong to the *purgative* or *illuminative* state must be treated differently from those that have entered into the *unitive* state. We need not mention that a

good director should have acquired a profound knowledge of dogmatic and moral theology, for that belongs to the necessary competency of an ordinary confessor.

(c) The third quality of a good director is experience. A good physician does not give to all his patients the same medicine and in equal doses, no matter how much it may be praised and recommended; and neither should a director of souls prescribe the same remedies for all his penitents and in like proportion; experience must have taught him to diagnose each case and the ordinary ways by which God leads different souls to holiness. To that experience belongs what St. Ignatius calls the discernment of spirits, for our wily enemy, the devil, often puts on the garb of a sheep to deceive the unwary and to capture his prey without fail. The above learning, coupled with prudence, gathered by experience, is sufficient to guide the souls, whom our benign Father wishes to lead to Christian perfection by the ordinary ways of His graces, but when there is question of the extraordinary ways of Providence, by which souls are rapidly brought to the highest degree of perfection through contemplation, ecstasies, and visions of God and of His infinite perfections, through apparitions or familiar colloquies with Our Lord or with His saints, a greater and special study is required and then a director must have recourse to books that specially treat of such miraculous interventions and should not come to any conclusion without consulting his ecclesiastical superiors.

V. It is evident that a physician must know his patient and the affliction that troubles him in order to prescribe the proper remedies; now the same knowledge is required of a director in order to heal the spiritual maladies of the pious souls who come to him for advice, but, as we can easily conceive, a director cannot find out what troubles the soul of the penitent who refuses to disclose the state of his conscience; therefore pious persons who seek a spiritual guide must make known to him not only their sins and all exterior actions or deeds, which are evil in themselves or in the end in view, but also their inclinations, their desires, the affections of their heart and its repugnances, their dominant passion and even their temptations, no matter

how shameful, by which they are assailed; for all these are necessary helps to the proper understanding of the state of one's conscience. It is also useful to disclose to our director the manner of making our meditations, the inspirations we receive and the mortifications by which we strive to subdue our passions, for, as St. Gregory well remarks, there are many vices that have the appearance of virtue and frequently "Satan transformeth himself into an angel of light." [4]

[4] 2 Cor. xi. 14.

ARTICLE IV

Third Means of Perfection

Spiritual Reading

Spiritual Reading is a Great Means of Perfection—Utility of Spiritual Reading for All—Remarks.

A strong desire for Christian perfection also determines the will to employ the means to attain it. What are those means, and how shall we learn their use? It belongs to masters and mistresses of novices to teach all that regards or tends to holiness, but since teachers are not always available and since instructions do not always make lasting impressions upon the heart and mind of the hearers, because of their transitoriness, recourse must be had to the approved writings of learned and holy men, which not only enlighten the mind, but engender in the soul pious affections that stimulate the will to greater efforts towards holiness of life.

Thus we understand the necessity of spiritual reading, so often inculcated and so much praised by the saints: "Spiritual reading," says St. Bernard, "is very necessary; for by it we learn what we must do and shun, and in what direction we must go. Therefore it is written: 'Thy word is a torch for my steps and a light on my way.' By reading, our minds and souls are enlightened. Forsooth, spiritual reading teaches us to pray and to labor; it prepares us for active as well as for contemplative life."[1] The same saint shows how we have within ourselves four appropriate means, or rather four steps or degrees of the same means, to arrive at our union with God, in which perfection consists: they are spiritual reading, meditation, vocal prayer, and contemplation.

[1] Serm. 50, *de modo bene vivendi.*

"Reading offers to the mind a solid food; meditation masticates and grinds it; prayer contributes to the savor, and contemplation is the very sweetness that delights and strengthens; thus by reading we seek the sweetness of a happy life, meditation finds it, prayer asks it, and contemplation tastes it." [2]

I. Spiritual reading is useful for all classes of people.

The great advantage which spiritual reading has over other pious exercises is that all people of whatever condition may find therein an appropriate remedy for their spiritual necessities. By this is not meant that every book treating of religious subjects can be put indiscriminately into the hands of every individual person, but that the truths of the Gospel, found in Holy Scripture or in duly approved Catholic works, are in themselves of great utility to all Christians, whether just or sinners, young or old, learned or unlearned. Beginners in the school of perfection cannot pass on to meditation without instruction, and, ordinarily speaking, this cannot be acquired without spiritual reading. For that very reason—although sermons have inspired many to investigate the saving truths of Christianity—nearly all the great conversions have been operated through spiritual reading. Take for example St. Augustine. He had listened to the sublime sermons of St. Ambrose, and, notwithstanding the admiration he had for this great Doctor's wisdom and the tears and prayers of St. Monica, his mother, he remained undecided until, moved thereto by divine inspiration, he read a chapter of one of St. Paul's epistles. St. Augustine also tells us of the conversion of two courtiers, of whom one accidentally took in his hands the history of the life of St. Anthony, the hermit. He communicated to his companion his determination to leave the service of the Emperor Theodosius, and the latter instead of opposing his resolution, followed his example. St. Ignatius was also converted by the reading of a pious book, whilst, after the siege of Pampeluna, he lay wounded in bed and took to reading for a distraction. It happened to be the life of the saints. He then and there resolved to abandon the military career and to embrace the life of a Christian waging war against

[2] *Ep. Guig. ad Festum*, c. 1, 2.

the enemies of his salvation. St. John Columbine received likewise the inspiration of devoting his life to God, through a book his pious spouse had given him to read, although he began to read it reluctantly.

Not wishing to multiply the examples of many others who first determined to abandon their sinful or careless lives through attentive spiritual reading, we may state that the conversion of the world was obtained not by reading, but by listening to the preaching of the apostles and their successors. Oral instruction is still the ordinary way employed by God to impart the knowledge of the Christian religion to children and to the unlearned, but for those who are able to read, there can be but little hope of their progress in virtue, unless they love the companionship of God and of His saints in pious books; for, as St. Augustine well remarks: "He that wishes always to be with his God, must often pray and read, for when we pray, we ourselves speak to God, but when we read, it is God who speaks to us."[3] Now we can well understand why St. Jerome recommended so incessantly the reading of the Holy Scriptures and of approved books written by holy and wise men, partly because they keep evil thoughts from our mind, as the same saint remarks in a letter to Salvian; partly because spiritual reading is like a mirror by which we can discover the stains of our souls, the beauty of virtue, the progress we have made or our little advancement towards perfection, as St. Gregory teaches us.[4]

Who cannot testify from his own experience that our memory is a store-house for good or evil? What we hear, see, read or do daily, is stored away in our memory and remains in the store-house in spite of us. The more we think of all things that have come to our knowledge, the deeper they take root, and the safest way to offset the effect of evil thoughts or representations in our mind, is to drown, as it were, all evil or useless memories in a great abundance of pious thoughts and make an effort to often recall the latter, and chase away evil imaginations that intrude upon our attention. We should do more. We must even avoid the circumstances of persons or things that accompany the evil representations that came to us by hearing, seeing, reading, or

[3] Serm. 12, *de tempore.* [4] Moral. 2; 1.

by our sinful acts, for they are so connected in our memory with what is sinful, that by thinking of the circumstances we evoke also the evil representation. Therefore St. Jerome wrote to Salvian: "Have always in hand a divine book to use it as a shield to thrust back the poisoned arrows of those evil thoughts that ordinarily torment young folks."

When St. Bernard, in the letter of the Cistercian Hugo to his brother, often attributed to the saint, tells us that spiritual reading is by itself but of little or no real value,[5] we must understand it in the sense of his explanation. Spiritual reading is, he considers, the foundation to arrive through meditation and prayer at contemplation or that state of union with God, in which the soul enjoys a taste of the heavenly delights even here upon earth. Now, to arrive at contemplation spiritual reading is of little benefit unless joined to meditation and prayer, but we should not forget that meditation cannot be conceived until by reading or instructions we have acquired the truth which forms the subject of our meditation. St. Bernard clearly extols spiritual reading in his book to his sister, for speaking of spiritual reading, he says: "By prayer—mental and vocal prayer—we are purified from our sins; through reading we are taught what we should do. Both are good if possible. If both cannot be had, it is better to pray than to read, for when we pray we speak with God; when we read, God speaks with us. . . . Divine reading is very necessary to us, for by reading we learn what we must do and what we must shun and to what we must tend, etc."

Although we cannot sufficiently extol the usefulness of spiritual reading, not all reading of pious books can be called spiritual reading. A student of theology or the teacher of that most eminent of all sciences, who purposely reads to understand the truths contained in the book he peruses, reads indeed a spiritual or divine book, but that does not constitute spiritual reading, which consists in reading with an affection for the truth or with an intention to portray in our conduct the pious impressions engendered in our soul through reading. The purpose of study is learning or erudition, but the end of spiritual reading is piety in sentiment and ultimately,

[5] Chapter XI.

conformity of our will to the will of God, or, as St. Augustine expresses it, spiritual reading prepares a spiritual food for our souls, and we may add that it prepares at least the soul to taste the savor thereof by whetting the soul's appetite for things divine, but through meditation, of which it is the foundation, it finally leads to the fear of God and of His holy will.

II. We now come to the qualities of profitable spiritual reading.

(a) The first quality of spiritual reading is purity of intention, for we have seen that reading with a view of obtaining knowledge, although useful to those whose duty it is to acquire it, cannot be called spiritual reading. The intention we should have, is to find a means by which we may forsake sin or by which we may advance in virtue, and thereby honor God by complying with His commandments or counsels: "Seek and you shall find." By spiritual reading we seek whatever may tend to the spiritual life of the soul and in order to find, we should ask the help of God: "Ask and you shall receive." We shall do well if before beginning to read, we raise our minds and hearts to God and beg of Him to direct our thoughts to those truths that will excite in us pious affections and a firm determination to serve Him. The oftener we renew these good intentions, the more abundant will be the fruit of our exercise. Since God speaks to us in spiritual reading, we should prove our fervent desire to listen to His words and say from the heart: "Speak, O Lord, for Thy servant listens."

(b) To draw abundant fruit from the reading of Holy Scripture and other pious works, we must read slowly, attentively with true desire of bringing home or of applying to ourselves the truths we have learned, and if we experience any pious affection during the perusal of a pious book, let us not hurry on to other thoughts, but stop awhile, giving full sway to the inspirations already received; for in this we must imitate the busy bee, that gathers first all the succulent juice of one flower before she hurries to another, according to the advice of St. Ephrem: "When you are occupied in reading," he says, "like the wise bee that makes her honey with the juice of flowers, you must carefully gather

the precious fruit of all you read in order to cure and fortify your soul." [6]

(c) Finally, he who wishes to read something profitable unto himself, should choose such books that conform to his needs and his capacity; but people of the world and even young religious are hardly able to judge for themselves what books suit their condition. There are books suitable for those who have arrived at perfection, which would be unsuitable for beginners or for those who have only made slight progress in virtue. The New Testament, the Four Gospels and the Acts, the Following of Christ, the Introduction to a Devout Life, the Spiritual Combat and the lives of certain saints are books suitable for all classes, but as to a multitude of others, pious Christians will do well to consult their spiritual director.

[6] *De recta vivendi rat.*, c. 36.

ARTICLE V

Fourth Means of Perfection

Meditation

In What Respect Meditation Differs From Spiritual Reading—The Psychology of Meditation—The Necessity of Meditation—The Evil Consequences of the Lack of It—Preparation for Meditation—Method to Meditate Properly—Exercise of the Intellect and of the Will—Resolutions in Meditation—Distractions—Aridities —Remarks.

One of the greatest means of perfection is meditation, called also mental prayer. Spiritual reading or instruction on the truths of our holy religion form the foundation of our meditations, for meditation is a serious reflection on revealed truths to excite in us pious affections. This first proposition requires a careful explanation.

I. Meditation, as taught by the masters of spiritual life, is not a careful study of a Gospel truth, presented to us for our consideration, since the end of meditation is not the acquisition of greater knowledge, but of greater virtue, and he who undertakes to meditate, should not seek worldly wisdom nor profound arguments in defence of the truth, but greater holiness and sanctity, through the practice of the moral and divine virtues and of other means of sanctification. If, for instance, I choose for my meditation the following truth: God created me to know Him and to serve Him in this world and to be happy with Him forever in the next, and in the beginning of my meditation, I revolve in my mind how far evolution, as taught by Darwin, is compatible with my faith in the creation, as related in the Bible, I am simply losing precious time; I am wilfully inattentive, I offend my Creator and I am despising a great opportunity of advancing towards perfection. How can meditation become a means of greater perfection? The method is very simple. Any revealed truth may be chosen as the subject of the meditation, but we should preferably choose subjects taken from

the sacred humanity of Our Lord, His teachings and exemplary life, because He is our perfect Model in all our thoughts, desires, words and actions and in shaping our conduct towards God and our neighbor, as well as in regulating our whole interior and exterior life in conformity to the will of our heavenly Father.

The method in use to accomplish a steady advancement in spiritual life, is based on the nature of the soul and on the correlation between its intellectual and sensible faculties. Man is usually inclined to act only after he sees some spiritual or temporal advantage that impels him, and to judge aright of the good he can attain and to act accordingly, he must exercise the principal faculties of the soul, intellect and will; but the will is influenced not only by the judgment of the intellect concerning what is good or evil, but also by the emotions, sentiments and affections of the heart, or of that inferior part of the soul where we find our likes and dislikes, love and hatred, and the many affections, which have their source in the two passions contrary to each other. The passions of the soul—especially when they are in league with the evil desires of the flesh—often obscure the intellect and weaken the will for good, and thus we find in our corrupted nature a law warring against the sound judgment of the intellect and against the freedom of the will, so that Saint Paul could say: "The good which I will, I do not! but the evil which I will not, that I do." [1]

In meditation the intellect is enlightened by the teachings of revelation; its false opinions and judgments about good and evil are corrected; it places the eternal welfare of the soul above all earthly considerations, and by taking the Gospel as its light and guide, rectifies and amends the affections and inclinations of the heart, or if they be evil, seeks to replace them with pure and holy affections and pious sentiments, so that the will may not be thwarted in its inclinations to side with the intellect, but rather be aided, yea, moved to follow the lead and obey the command of the intellect; for the will being a blind faculty, needs the strong guidance of the intellect enlightened by faith, as well as the influence of the holiest sentiments of the heart.

[1] Rom. vii. 19.

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The pious affections engendered by meditation, of which they are the main fruit, differ according to the subject under consideration, and the same subject may awaken different sentiments and a variety of resolutions, although it is preferable that our resolutions should be few, not more than two or three, and be limited to well determined and specific acts. Thus the meditation on the perfections of God, His eternity, His omnipotence, His infinite wisdom, His immensity, etc., will naturally enkindle in the soul sentiments of awe, adoration, love of preference and of complacency in the infinite Good; the meditation on the passion of Our Lord begets sentiments of compassion for Him in His pains and sufferings, hatred of sin and regret for the part we have taken, together with His torturers, in inflicting upon Him the most inhuman treatment, and deep-felt sorrow for our ingratitude shown by our many offences against the Divine Majesty; meditation on heaven and on the everlasting joys of the elect will instill into the heart lively desires of sharing their happiness that surpasses all understanding, as well as contempt of riches, pleasures and honor and glory, that might endanger our eternal welfare, and also resignation to the will of God in afflictions, since these will add to our merit here below and to our glory hereafter; meditation on death, judgment and hell awaken a salutary fear of God's justice and detestation of sin, which alone make death, judgment and hell to be dreaded; the fear of God's justice induces and impels the will to shun whatever may offend the all-knowing Judge; the death of our Savior on the Cross, considered as a sacrifice of infinite merit, is apt to produce in the sinner hope of forgiveness, gratitude for the excellence of the proffered means of salvation, and as fruit, a change of life, etc. There are acts which seldom should be omitted in any meditation, such as the detestation of sin, and contempt of self because of our ingratitude; submission to God's holy will and the fixed resolve to faithfully comply with our obligations, specifying one or two of these, and raising meanwhile our hearts to God in humble supplication for the graces necessary thereto.

II. The fixed resolve or earnest determination to avoid some imperfection, fault or sin, of which we have been guilty,

or to practice something acceptable to our heavenly Father, is also an essential part of mental prayer, for sincere and pious affections, although necessary to stimulate the will, would be bare of results without a firm purpose of amendment. Here we should be on our guard against the too common practice of extending our good resolutions to general or undetermined acts. They should be practical and be limited to specific deeds, which we will perform on the same or following day, or as soon as occasion presents itself. These occasions should be foreseen as likely to happen in the near future. Again, as has been intimated already, we should guard against too many resolutions, and the reason is that we having many enemies to combat, many passions to overcome which should all be subdued, no matter when or where they attack us; we must avoid dividing our efforts and thereby weakening our strength. It is also advisable that we should reserve our main strength and our greatest efforts to vanquish our dominant passion or that passion which is the fruitful cause of most of our sins.

We have now found in the nature of the soul a convincing argument for the practice of meditation as a spiritual exercise, and meanwhile we have outlined its essential parts, for meditation is nothing else than a serious reflection on a revealed truth with a view of exciting in the soul holy affections capable of making the will tend effectively towards perfection by salutary resolutions.

III. Meditation is not necessary to salvation like vocal prayer, and therefore, laymen can save their souls without its practice, as we have explained already. Nevertheless, meditation seems necessary, says St. Liguori, to the soul, that it may persevere in grace. Moreover, "With desolation is the world made desolate, because there is no one that thinketh in the heart." [2] If the desolation of sin has come into the world, because of the neglect of thinking seriously on eternal truths, is it not the duty of every Christian to meditate upon them? There are many in hell, who, if they were questioned why they are imprisoned in that dismal abode, would be obliged to answer that it is because they never thought on hell. This accords with the warning of

[2] Jerem. xii. 11.

Holy Scripture: "In all thy works remember thy last end and thou shalt never sin."[3] Therefore St. Jerome writes to Calancia: "Moderate sufficiently the solicitude which animates you in the care of your house, that you may still have a few moments left over to employ for the spiritual necessities of your soul. Seek a proper place sufficiently removed from the noise of your family, where you can shelter yourself against the tempest occasioned by the multitude of your occupations and where you may in the silence of solitude appease the turbulent flood of your thoughts." Thereafter he advises her to meditate in silence on the eternal truths, that she may repair her spiritual losses caused by her family duties.

As to religious and ecclesiastics who are in duty bound to strive for perfection, it must be held that they are likewise bound not to neglect one of the most efficacious means to attain that sanctity which is required of those who have made to their God the sacrifice of their life. St. Thomas develops that truth in a clear and remarkable manner, when he speaks of Christian or true devotion, in which charity or perfection consists and which he defines as a prompt will to do whatever regards the service and worship of God.[4] In the same question (a.3) he explains that meditation is necessarily promoting devotion, because by meditating we learn the motives and reasons why we should consecrate our lives to God. Two considerations induce us to render that service to our Maker; one is His goodness and bounty shown in the many blessings bestowed upon man, and therefore as the Psalmist says: "It is to our advantage to attach ourselves to God and to confide in the Lord."[5] This consideration excites affections in our hearts which are the immediate cause of devotion. The other consideration is taken from man's defects, for being aware of our weakness through serious reflections on our past, we feel impelled to have recourse to God, according to the text of Psalm cxx. 1, 2: "I have lifted up my eyes to the mountain, from whence help shall come to me. My help is from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth." Thus we see how meditation leads to

[3] Eccli. vii. 40.

[4] St. Thomas 2.2. q 82 a 1.

[5] Ps. lxxii. 28.

true devotion, and Christian devotion leads to perfect charity or perfection.

We might further appeal to the experience of all those who have ever pretended to live a devout life, to the teachings and example of all the saints and of our Blessed Lord Himself, for He often sought the mountain solitude, to pray whole nights and to contemplate the divine perfections, not because He needed the silence of the night, for His soul always enjoyed the beatific vision, but because He desired to show by His example the safest road to paradise and to perfect union with God, even in this life.

IV. The following method may be profitably employed by those who undertake the pious exercise of meditation, that they may proceed with order and gather from it much fruit: 1, the preparation including the composition of place; 2, the attentive consideration of the points of the meditation. This constitutes its most essential part and is sometimes called the body of the meditation. In it, all the faculties of the soul are exercised: intellect, memory, imagination, the emotional faculties of the soul, usually called the heart, as well as will; 3, thanksgiving and the calling upon God for aid, that we may faithfully comply with the good resolutions made during meditation.

1. Preparation. Although meditation without preparation is always useful, provided it be undertaken in the proper spirit, nevertheless, it will be more fruitful of spiritual results, if due preparation precede it. The preparation should be two-fold, remote and proximate. The first consists in shunning sin and in avoiding a gay and easy life, and also in being recollected as much as possible, in the midst of all temporal cares and worldly occupations. The second consists in the acts which should immediately precede the meditation. "Before meditation prepare thy soul, and be not as a man that tempteth God," says Ecclesiasticus,[6] meaning by this that it is like tempting God to expect salutary fruit without due preparation. (a) The first act should be to seek a suitable place and to adopt a posture which will the least possible interfere with serious reflection. (b) The second should be to forget, for the moment, all our daily

[6] Eccli. xviii. 23.

cares and occupations. (c) Our third solicitude should be to purify our soul from past sins by an act of contrition. (d) This should be followed by an ardent prayer to obtain thereby the graces necessary to a devout meditation. (e) The fifth manner of preparation consists in placing ourselves in the presence of God under His all-seeing eye, and in making a humble confession of our unworthiness to appear in the presence of the Divine Majesty. (f) It is also well that we should form some good intention to profit by the mental prayer for some special spiritual necessity.

Now we suppose that the instruction has been given or that the points of the meditation have been read and that we have listened attentively to the truths proposed for our serious reflection. There remains only as a preparation that we should, in imagination, recall what is termed the composition of place, to keep our mind from wandering on subjects foreign to the truths to be considered. To this end we may imagine our Blessed Lord sitting on a little mound teaching His apostles and disciples, among whom we count ourselves, or we may represent to ourselves the last judgment and the Son of God ready to pronounce sentence, or the Savior dying on the Cross or any other material representation best calculated to rivet our attention.

If the subject of the meditation be an abstract truth, like the providence, beauty, bounty, justice, sanctity and immensity of God, those that have progressed in the practice of serious mental prayer, had better dispense with all material representations and content themselves with reflecting on the truths themselves, simply relying on what faith teaches, and after penetrating the truths presented for their reflection, draw from them suitable sentiments and conclusions to guide them in their actions of that or the next day.

2. The body of the meditation. The body of the meditation is nothing else than the serious reflection on the proposed truth or the application of our intellect and our will, to strive to understand not only the teaching itself, but also to ascertain the relation these truths bear to God and to us, and, through this knowledge, engender in our hearts suitable affections and also corresponding resolutions for the immediate future. An example will elucidate our meaning. The

first truth we read on the first page of the Bible is that in the beginning God created heaven and earth. My judgment tells me that God did not need the world, as He had existed myriads of years before the beginning of creation; and faith tells me that man, one of the creatures of God, was made to love and serve God in this world and to be happy with Him in the next. From this truth we can deduce many others, such as our duties toward God, of service, adoration, praise, etc. I take one, that of service. My reason tells me that the service of God is my only business during life, for that alone will secure the end of my existence. We may now develop that truth for a few minutes and we next consider God as the Author of our existence; the majesty, the bounty, the power, etc., of Him, Who has deigned to bring us out of nothing. Here we have a multitude of reasons to excite in our hearts sentiments of homage, love and gratitude. These affections will grow within us without much effort, the longer we meditate on God's kindness and bounty in the creation. Lastly, we look upon our past life, and base ingratitude will stare us in the face; regrets, confusion and sorrow for our many sins will naturally ensue, as well as firm resolutions for the immediate future; but in order to avoid generalities, we should determine upon some specific acts of service to God to prove our gratitude and love to so great a Benefactor, *e. g.*, often to thank Him during the day for the honor of being chosen to serve Him, and it is well also that we should join some mortification to atone for our indifference and ingratitude. We end the meditation by supplicating God to help us in carrying out our good resolutions, relying on His goodness, on the merits of the Savior and on the intercession of our Blessed Mother.

Let us note here that our meditation should be confined to two or three points, deduced from the main truth, but if one point be sufficient to incite in us the proper affections during the time we can bestow upon the meditation, there is no need to dwell upon a second. This must also be held with regard to our practical resolutions, which should not exceed one or two at most.

Those that cannot meditate should supply the deficiency by saying their prayers very slowly and with due attention,

pausing often to excite in their hearts pious affections, either of sorrow for their past sins, or of desire to better serve their God in the future. Confessors will frequently find simple and devout souls whom they can direct in their efforts to make short meditations that will produce salutary effects; for, with a little instruction from their confessor, all people of good will and pious disposition—except perhaps those that are devoid of ordinary intelligence, for whom vocal prayers recited slowly will take the place of meditation—can and should meditate, meditation being but an ordinary exercise of the faculties of the soul, to wit.: memory, intellect, the emotional faculties and free will. Memory, intellect, and will belong to the superior or higher faculties of the soul, but affections belong to the inferior faculties or passions of the soul, such as love, desire, admiration or joy concerning objects judged to be good, or hatred, fear, contempt, sorrow, concerning objects thought to be evil. Memory recalls what we have read or heard, the intellect reflects upon it and draws from it practical lessons, and these excite in the soul affections which help the intellect in directing the will to form resolutions corresponding to the affections or sentiments of the heart.

V. Distractions, aridities, and temptations during meditation.

1. We often meet people who complain of distractions that do not permit them to meditate, in spite of their efforts to fix their attention by what we have called the composition of place, which, as we said, consists in representing to our mind some scene or picture connected with the fundamental subject of the meditation and which is of itself capable of keeping the imagination from wandering. Are distractions a reason to abandon mental prayer as some people contend? Before answering that question we should state that there are two kinds of distractions, voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary distractions are sinful, as they offend God directly through irreverence or indirectly through indifference to His holy teaching.

(a) Now it is plain, if one begins his meditation with the intention of dwelling upon thoughts more to his liking than the truths of our holy religion or of studying some

difficult question which he is determined to solve therein, that he had better defer his meditation to another time; but it is not a sufficient reason to abandon the practice of mental prayer because he has often been guilty of irreverence through wilful distractions. He simply must lament the loss of the priceless gift vouchsafed to him for his spiritual progress, for as an unknown author well remarks, has any one ever refrained from eating or drinking because of his intemperance? Has a physician given up his practice, because through his carelessness, his patient did not recover as fast as was expected? Has a lawyer ever abandoned his law business, because, through his neglect of studying the law of the case in which he is employed, he has been unsuccessful in obtaining a favorable verdict from a court or jury? The business of a Christian is to tend towards sanctity, and if, through his own fault, he has neglected one of the principal means to attain it, he owes it to himself to bemoan his indifference and to amend his ways.

(b) If, on the contrary, distractions are due to a wandering imagination or to divers representations which the devil knows so well cunningly to inject into our thoughts, this should not alarm us in the least nor disquiet us, since involuntary distractions are unavoidable. "It is impossible," says Cassian, "that our minds be not attacked by those thoughts (thoughts of distractions). As it is in our power to admit or to reject them, and as it is not absolutely in our power to prevent them from coming up, we are likewise always free to despise them and to chase them away." Therefore, although thoughts foreign to our meditation, may so distract us that our imagination chases them like so many phantoms, we lose nowise the fruit of our meditation, provided we return to our task as soon as we are aware of the intruders' presence. They who are frequently troubled by these involuntary wanderings of their mind, will do well never to begin their meditation without a special prayer to their guardian angel, that this faithful guardian of our thoughts and actions may, by divine permission, chase away their vain imaginations and bring their wandering thoughts back to the consciousness of the presence of God. It is also desirable that they impress deeply upon their mind these words of St.

Basil: "If they, who are in the presence of their prince and who speak with him, ordinarily look at no other object, with greater reason must he who prays to God remain recollected before the Lord Who scrutinizes hearts and thoughts." [7]

2. Aridity during meditation is also given sometimes as an excuse to dispense with its practice, and it is generally relied upon by people who formerly took great pleasure in the pious exercise. The explanation of this apparent incongruity is easily forthcoming, if we reflect that there are many inconsistent Christians, who love all kinds of devotions, as long as they experience an unction or certain pleasing emotions in their observance; but as soon as God withdraws those tender feelings of the heart and sensible consolations, and instead, sends them aridities, they lose all courage and omit partly or wholly their meditations; and disgust for both mental and vocal prayer is but a just punishment for their pusillanimity and cowardice. If such half-hearted Christians would only reflect that the essence of devotion is not found in sensibility, but in the prompt will to serve God in all things, they would not so easily abandon a salutary exercise so indispensable to their spiritual advancement. Let them be reminded that meditation performed in aridity or even with a certain repugnance, is the more meritorious in proportion to the obstacles which are met in its practice. Instead of omitting a meditation because of aridity, the pious Christian will summon all his courage, and, undaunted, begin the salutary exercise, relying upon God's help to perform it to the best of his ability, no matter what may be the cause of the aridity.

As a conclusion, we resume the different cases of aridity applicable to meditation. (A) The usual cause of aridity is the neglect of the duties of one's state of life or the want of reflection in performing them, and by this we mean the compliance with them without a thought of God, or simply because they suit one's taste and inclinations. How can one be recollected in meditation, if he never thinks of God during the day? These and similar causes of aridity must be removed, that we may meditate with fruit, for aridity, in these cases, is a well merited punishment for sloth, and is in-

[7] Collat. i. 17.

tended for one's correction. (B) Aridity may also be a trial sent by God. The masters of spiritual life teach us that in the ordinary ways of Providence, beginners, still in the purgative state—that is they who have just entered the path leading to perfection—often experience great spiritual consolation in their devotions, so much so that they find a true inward satisfaction and pleasure in their performance. Later on, when they have advanced somewhat and have entered the illuminative state, God often withdraws those spiritual favors, which encourage the beginner and sends aridities to replace them. This, the good Lord allows to purify those He had first encouraged, with the view to reward with greater graces those who remain faithful during the trial. To imagine that God abandons those souls who are disposed, among many imperfections, to seek His holy will in all things, is only a little short of blasphemy, although the pious souls, who suffer from aridity and even fear that God has abandoned them, are generally blameless, because they attribute their aridity to their past sins and present imperfections, and their fear is not one of despair of God's mercy. They need encouragement from a wise and sympathetic director or confessor, and they should never omit any of their customary devotions, but always strive to perform them in a more perfect manner than ever before. To them is applicable the answer of Job: "Wisdom," he says, "is not found in the land of them that have delights. Behold the fear of the Lord is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." [8]

(C) Finally there have been pious souls who not only suffered from aridity, but also from an excessive reluctance to meditate, and notwithstanding, they have already arrived at perfection or the unitive state, as explained in the beginning of this Manual, and they have passed years in the practice of the most sublime virtues, have faithfully walked in the footsteps of the Savior and of the saints, have suffered great afflictions of body and soul, have endured, with exemplary patience and even with interior joy, ridicule, contempt and even calumny, and like St. Teresa and St. Catherine of Sienna, have preferred to suffer than to die, and rather to die than to live without sufferings; such souls of

[8] Job xxviii. 12, 13.

God's predilection may with the permission of a pious and learned director omit for a short time their meditation, and the confessor may even forbid them to make an attempt to meditate, provided these three conditions are found to exist: first, practical inability to make a meditation, together with a repugnance and disgust for the exercise, which gave them formerly great spiritual consolation; secondly, a reluctance to apply the imagination or the senses to any object interior or exterior relating to the subject of meditation, and an indifference to the scenes of the Passion of Our Lord, to the representation of the Last Judgment or to religious statues or holy pictures; and thirdly, the intimate joy experienced in solitude through recollection and the love of God; and the reason given therefore by writers on mystic theology is, that meditation has then attained its objective and end, which is nothing else than an intimate union with God, and that nothing satiates the fervor of such souls but contemplation of God's infinite perfections and above all of His goodness in all His works. Still, such fervent souls should not abandon meditation altogether, but must resume it whenever they feel able and they experience any progress through its practice.

(D) Lastly, some find an excuse for giving up meditation in temptations. Temptations are caused by evil passions, the concupiscence of the flesh or by the wicked suggestions of the evil one. If mental prayer could be the direct cause of any temptation, there might be sometimes a reason to omit it; but it is hardly conceivable how it could by itself become the cause of temptations. It may be an occasion of temptations like any other act, such as eating, drinking, reading, studying, conversing with others, walking, etc.; but nobody will ever resolve to abstain from a lawful and useful occupation, because of temptations that might arise. Pious people simply despise them and think no more of them. It is true that temptations during mental prayer are usually more persistent and therefore more annoying, but this should cause no wonderment. The devil hates anything that tends to our spiritual advancement, and, as we shall presently learn that mental prayer is a great help to vocal prayer, and since meditation without the asking of God's help to aid us in our good resolutions is not complete, we can easily understand

how the devil, above all things, hates devout meditation. The wicked enemy of our salvation presents the most horrible impure representations to the imagination of some people; he suggests occasions of revenge to others; he tempts others with thoughts against faith, thoughts of despair or presumption; others again are annoyed by scruples or other wicked suggestions. Whatever ruses Satan may employ, they should not distract us any more than a fly that attempts to alight on our cheeks; let us simply drive them off, and if they come back, let us drive them off again. The devil's repeated attacks cannot hurt us, whilst our constancy in repelling them makes him furious. If temptations cause the least annoyance, a little short prayer, a sign of the Cross will usually dispel them. It is well also that we should remember that even our Blessed Lord allowed Himself to be tempted by the devil. Our Divine Master thereby taught us that temptation is not a sin, and timid souls, who experience scruples because of their temptations, should be encouraged in their determination to strive for holiness of life by the example of the Savior, who has taught them the arms wherewith they can overcome the wily enemy, to wit.: prayer, fasting and faith in His teachings as well as confidence in His powerful aid. "Wherefore it behooved Him," says St. Paul, "to be made in all things like unto His brethren . . . for in that wherein He Himself has suffered and been tempted, He is able to succor them also that are tempted. . . For we have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tempted in all things like we are without sin. Let us go, therefore, to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid." [9]

Conclusion. We will conclude this article on meditation with some remarks on the best time for meditation and on the subjects to be chosen. The best time for meditation is morning and evening, according to the words of the Psalmist: "O God, my God, to Thee I watch at break of day. Let my prayer be directed as incense in Thy sight, with hands lifted up as evening sacrifice." [10] Usually meditation should not exceed one-half hour for lay people, but religious should devote an hour each day to the pious exercise. As for the

[9] Heb. ii. 17, 18; iv. 15, 16. [10] Ps. lxii. 2; cxl. 2.

subject of the meditation, beginners should choose subjects that inspire fear of God and hatred of sin. Meditations on the life and death of the Savior are especially proper for those who have made progress, as they naturally inspire the love of virtue; but those meditations are also useful to all degrees of perfections, as our Redeemer is a model of the greatest perfection for all people of all conditions. Finally, the exercise on the perfections and attributes of God should be especially recommended to those who have overcome their passions, and practice, although imperfectly, all the virtues of their state of life. The serious consideration of God's perfections are mainly intended to excite fervor in our soul and to unite it more intimately to our heavenly Father, Who is infinitely amiable in Himself and by nature inclined to share His perfections with those who love Him.

ARTICLE VI

Fifth Means of Perfection

Prayer as a Means of Perfection

Necessity of Prayer—What We May and What We Should Ask in Prayer—Efficacy of Prayer—Qualities of Prayer—Vocal Prayer —Attention in Vocal Prayer.

We come now to the fifth and most indispensable of all the means of perfection we have so far considered, namely, prayer. Meditation and prayer are so closely connected that they are like two inseparable sisters and therefore they are always seen together. Hence they are designated also by the names of mental and vocal prayer. In both we direct our minds to God; but in the first, we seek the will of God and what is wanting in us; and in the second, we supplicate God for what we need: "Meditation," says St. John Damascence, "teaches us what is wanting in us, prayer obtains it. The former shows us the way and the latter conducts us to it: by meditation we learn the dangers which threaten us and by prayer we escape them." [1]

Vocal prayer is not necessarily expressed in words: a simple thought directed to God with a desire to obtain from Him what we need, is already a prayer, and then it is called interior prayer; but, when it is expressed in words, it is properly called vocal prayer. The lifting up of our minds to God with proper affections, although a prayer in a wide sense, is not what is properly called prayer; for prayer is, in a sense, the interpreter of our desires with God, and thus divine praises are not commonly called a prayer, unless they contain a desire of God's glory.

I. The necessity of prayer depends on three fundamental truths, viz.: the providence of God, our dependence on Him

[1] Serm. 2 on Feast of St. Andrew.

for our many interior and exterior necessities, and the will of God, Who usually only grants His aid to those who ask it.

(a) The providence of God over all things created is a truth well established in Holy Writ, for our Savior has taught it clearly in His sermon on the mount: "Behold," says He, "the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns, and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are you not of much more value that they?" [2] And in another place He says: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And not one of them falls to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all counted." [3] Divine Providence extends likewise to all the faculties of the soul as well as to its existence, but whilst God maintains in our souls our will, memory and understanding, He leaves man free to choose good or evil. This Catholic doctrine being admitted by all, the children of the Church need no further explanation.

(b) The Church teaches that, notwithstanding man's freedom to choose between good and evil, his liberty has been seriously impaired by the sin of Adam and Eve, in that the intellectual and sensual appetites, the passions of the soul and the concupiscence of the flesh, are not now any longer, like before Adam's prevarication, subject to reason and reason subject to God. There is a war, a deadly struggle going on between man's noblest faculties and the evil inclinations of his vitiated nature, and as these obscure his reason and weaken his will, man unassisted by the grace of God can no longer observe all the commandments. St. Paul describes one phase of this struggle in man, when he alludes to the two laws in man's nature, one the law of the spirit, and the other the law of the flesh "I am delighted," he says, "with the law of God according to the inward man (my mind); but I see another law in my members fighting against the law of my mind and captivating me in the law of sin, that is, in my members. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God by Jesus Christ Our Lord." [4]

(c) Our own experience agrees with the truth taught in Holy Scripture and in the decisions of the Church, prin-

[2] Matt. vi. 26. [3] Matt. x. 29, 30. [4] Rom. vii. 22 *ff.*

cipally in the decisions of the Council of Trent. The same experience extends to the concupiscible and irascible passions of the soul. With what difficulty do we overcome the passions of self-love, pride, envy of the welfare of others, hatred and revenge, sadness in trials and tribulations and the thousands of evil desires that spring from the unconquered appetites of the soul. These evil inclinations still further obscure man's intellect and weaken his will.

(d) There are still two other enemies of our salvation: the wicked world and the wiles of our archenemy Satan. "Love not the world nor the things that are in the world," says St. James, and thus we are warned to shun, as far as we can, all contact with the world, to flee its pleasures and glory, and to detest its maxims. How alluring its pressing invitations to enjoyments! How plausible its arguments to make man taste of the specious satisfactions which worldly honors and glory procure! Add to this the envy of the devil, who, singly or with the aid of our evil inclinations and the wicked example of worldlings, watches with a care and foresight—which hatred alone can inspire—every opportunity to harm us; for "Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour." [5]

II. We may now ask what means our good God, Who wills our salvation, yea, more, demands our perfection, has placed at our disposal to vanquish the combined efforts of our enemies. The only means always available to repel the poisoned darts of Satan, the shameful appetites of our vitiated nature and the false maxims of the world and its allurements, is prayer, and therefore we are taught often to say: "lead us not into temptation: but deliver us from evil."

Prayer is necessary to salvation, because God alone can grant us the graces to resist our evil appetites and to practice the good works He has enjoined. "Ask and you shall receive," [6] says Our Lord, teaching us thereby that unless we ask we shall not receive. By commanding us to pray, He likewise inculcates its necessity unto salvation: "We ought always to pray," [7] "watch and pray always." [8] "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation." [9] St. Peter

[5] 1 Peter v. 8. [6] John xvi. 24. [7] Luke xviii. 1.
[8] *Ibid.*, xxi. 36. [9] Matt. xxvi. 41.

and St. Paul teach the obligation of prayer with the same earnestness: "Be prudent and watch in prayer." [10] "Pray without ceasing . . . for it is the will of God." [11] Therefore we conclude with the Angelic Doctor: "Every man is bound to pray to procure the spiritual goods which God alone can give." [12] And whereas with the exception of the first grace tending to conversion, God seldom grants any spiritual favors unless we pray for them, it is of Him we must ask them.

III. Without prayer we are like a fish out of the water, according to St. John Chrysostom: "If you cease to pray," he says, "you act as if you were taking a fish out of the water, for as water is the life of the fish, likewise prayer must be the life of the Christian." [13] In another place he says that one gives proof of insanity, when he refuses to participate in that eminent honor, because he does not love the exercise of prayer and cannot be persuaded that it is the death of the soul, when any one refuses to bend the knee to God.[14]

We have spoken at length on distractions in meditations and what was said concerning them may be applied to prayer. The devil hates both spiritual exercises, and the latter more than the former, because prayer is necessary unto salvation, while both prayer and meditation are indispensable to successfully tend toward perfection. Prayer is necessary for all conditions of life, but especially for those who have taken to heart the urging request of Our Lord: "Be ye perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect," and have decided to leave no stone unturned to make daily progress in virtue, and never cease their efforts to acquire greater holiness until they breathe their last. These should foster a spirit of prayer in their hearts; they must love it and feel, according to the expression of St. Chrysostom, like a fish out of the water, when their obligations take them away from the actual exercises of prayer. To them especially it is said: "Pray and pray always," and to obey that precept to the letter, they should never forget the presence of God in the midst of their most arduous occupations, but should frequently lift up their

[10] 1 Peter iv. 7. [11] Thess. v. 17 *ff.* [12] St. Thomas 2.2.q.83 a.4.
[13] *De Orando Deum*, L. 2. [14] *Ibid.*, 1.

minds to God in adoration and supplication, and thus their whole life becomes a continual prayer. The great necessity of prayer for those who tend to perfection, becomes more evident, if they take into consideration the greater and more efficacious graces they stand in need of. They have not only to observe the commandments of God, but likewise the evangelical counsels; they must not only avoid mortal sin, but also the smallest deliberate venial sin; they must overcome their passions, and practice the moral and theological virtues, and finally they must sanctify their ordinary actions in a spirit of perfect charity. To them prayer, with the other means of sanctification, becomes the daily food of their souls, but prayer is a stimulant as well as a spiritual aliment, and whilst it enlivens every devotion, it stirs up the fire of charity without which the actions of man are devoid of merit.

IV. Having shown the necessity of prayer, we have partly proven its efficacy; but to encourage us to pray with greater fervor and absolute confidence, our amiable Father has deigned to assure us that His ear is always attentive to our prayers. We have many proofs of the efficacy of prayer in the Old Testament, but we need no other witness of the consoling truth than our beloved Savior, Who emphasizes His declarations by a preamble, calling attention to the fact that it is He Who speaks, and none other: *"And I say to you:* ask and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you; for everyone that asketh, receiveth, and he that seeketh, findeth, and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." [15] What does the Savior mean by that preamble "and I say to you," but call our attention to the fact that He is truthful and faithful in His promises. He repeats again the same promise, extending it to all things whatsoever and with a similar preamble: *"Therefore I say to you,* all things whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you." [16]

Can we read those texts without the firm conviction that the amiable Savior means what His simple and clear words imply, to wit., that they contain an absolute assurance that His Father in heaven accords us whatsoever we pray for? But to convince us still further, He proclaims the above

[15] Luke xi. 9 *seq.* [16] Mark xi. 24.

promises in a manner still more solemn when He says: "Amen, amen I say to you; if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it to you," [17] and in order to inspire a still greater confidence in His promise He repeats it again in different words.[18] After sincere and serious consideration of those words, to what conclusion must we come? To none other than that the good God is bound by this solemn declaration to which heaven and earth can give testimony, and that, if our prayer deserves the name and comes from the heart, it is sure to be heard.

But some one may say: suppose that God had in mind, on account of our unworthiness, not to hear our prayers, would He be obliged to stand by His first intention? In view of His formal promises God could only have intended not to grant any further favors to a sinner, if the sinner reject the only means to appease His anger, to wit: prayer and penance. Besides, "Prayer does violence to God," says St. John Climacus, that is, in some way it constrains Him and forces Him to grant to him that prays what otherwise He would not. Of this we have an example in Holy Writ. Whilst Moses was on Mt. Sinai to receive God's law, the Israelites made to themselves a golden calf, adored it as their god and offered it sacrifice. Since the God of heaven and earth knew that Moses had in mind to beg forgiveness for the people's idolatry, He said to him: "Let Me alone that My wrath may be kindled against them and that I may destroy them." Notwithstanding this admonition, Moses besought the Lord to lay aside His indignation and to be appeased. What was the result? "The Lord was appeased from doing the evil which He had spoken against His people." [19]

We might here add many proofs of the efficacy of prayer taken from the writings of the Doctors of the Church and from the exemplary lives of the saints, if space would permit; but let it suffice that by prayer we appeal to the infinite bounty of God, to His fidelity to His promises, to His inclination to spread His favors broadcast upon all those who have recourse to Him in all their necessities. David never ceases to extol His goodness and His clemency towards sinners and with him all the prophets of the Old Law. The

[17] John xvi. 23. [18] *Ibid.*, xvi. 24. [19] Exod. xxxii. 10, 14.

history of the Jewish people likewise testifies that God is more inclined to exercise His mercy than His justice, and if to all that we add in the balance the humble prayers of an infinite number of saints, we cease to wonder, when we are told that our bountiful Father "Wills to give us more than we are willing to accept and to show us greater mercy than is our desire to be delivered from our miseries." [20] "Who can fear to be deceived," says the same holy Doctor, "when Truth Itself makes the promise?" [21] If we still are spiritually weak and languishing, if we still have daily to deplore our many imperfections, and if we make so little progress in virtue, the cause lies in us: it is because we do not pray or, if we pray, our prayers rather exasperate than conciliate our bountiful Father.

Qualities of a good prayer.

It has been duly proven that we cannot doubt the efficacy of prayer: our conviction of it is founded on the veracity, fidelity and omnipotence of the living God, Who has promised to give us whatsoever we pray for; but as we can easily understand, our prayers must be considered in the light of Him, Who is addressed, as well as of him who prays. God is our Father: He cannot give what is hurtful to us and He acts in a fatherly manner, if He gives us something better than what we ask for; or if He delays His gifts for reasons known to Him alone, we may well assume that it is to try our constancy or to bestow His favors more abundantly later on. God alone knows the future and knows what is best for us, and He alone sees the heart of men. From the part of him who prays, he must ask in a proper manner; for if our prayers are not always heard, St. James gives the reason for it, when he says: "You ask and receive not, because you ask amiss." [22]

The nature of prayer determines its qualities. Our prayers depend both on the things we ask and on the persons for whom we pray.

St. Thomas [23] gives us four essential qualities of an efficacious prayer, to wit: that one ask for himself things use-

[20] St. Aug. Serm. 29 *de Verb. Dom.* [21] L. 22, *de Civ. Dei,* c. 8.
[22] James iv. 3. [23] 2.2.q.83 a.15 to 2.

ful unto salvation, with piety and with perseverance; but in the body of the article and in other parts of the same question, he names other qualities or conditions of an efficacious prayer and thus we find in all eight principal qualities, viz.: 1, that we pray with humility; 2, with confidence; 3, with perseverance; 4, that we ask for ourselves; 5, the things necessary for salvation; 6, with piety or devotion; 7, with charity; 8, with attention. Our prayers with these conditions are sure to be heard, says the Angelic Doctor.[24]

1. Humility is indispensable to the efficacy of our prayer, for he who asks must be imbued with a sense of his pitiful condition. What are we of ourselves but nothingness? All we have and all we are is a pure gift of God's liberality. God is everything to us; He can take away from us our being whenever it pleases Him, and what we possess of goodness, was only lent to be used in His service. Humility must accompany all our actions, as we shall see later, because "God resisteth the proud," but it is still more necessary unto prayer because its efficacy depends on it; for "God gives His grace to the humble." [25] Let him who prays remember the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican; let him consider, when he prays, that he is but a contemptible beggar in the presence of the Most High; let him think himself unworthy even of the slightest favor, since he has abused God's gifts in his past life, and let him strike his breast, saying: "Lord have mercy on me, a sinner." How much more is humility in prayer necessary to them that tend to perfection! "Do not imagine," says the author of the *Imitation*, "that you have made the least progress as long as you do not esteem yourself to be the lowest of all creatures." [26] Devout souls shall therefore, as a preparation for their prayer, reflect on the words of St. Francis of Assisi: "Who art Thou and who am I, O my God?"

2. Confidence or faith. We should pray with confidence in God's infinite goodness and trust in His promises, for His munificence and liberality exceed all our hope and surpass all our greatest expectation. Our faith in our amiable Redeemer rests on His own words: "All things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." [27] "Believ-

[24] 2.2 q.83 a.15. [25] James iv. 6. [26] B. 2; 2; 2. [27] Matt. xxi. 22.

ing," here expresses the confidence and trust that we will obtian whatsoever we ask, according to the words of our Savior already cited: "Therefore I say unto you, all things whatsoever you ask, when you pray, believe that you shall receive and they shall come unto you." [28] And according to the teaching of St. James: "If any of you want wisdom, let him ask it of God . . . but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." [29]

We see then how humility and confidence must, like two sisters, co-operate towards the success of our prayer, for if confidence be once lost, either because we do not immediately obtain what we ask, or because prayer becomes irksome on account of more agreeable occupations, we will soon abandon prayer altogether; yea, the devil often suggests humility as an excuse for not persevering in praying, when our desires are not promptly fulfilled, and thus there are some who neglect their prayers, because they claim that their sins keep God from granting what they have asked. Such sentiments are not true humility, which demands that no one should give way to impatience, if God delays in granting His favors, nor should we distrust His promises. What right have we to an immediate compliance with our request on the part of God? Are His favors not solely due to His goodness and mercy? Therefore, if for a time He gives no ear to our desires, His promises and His mercy insure a greater reward, provided we continue to grant Him what He demands of us, humility and confidence.

3. With perseverance. When our merciful Redeemer promised to give us whatsoever we ask, He has not promised to grant it immediately. He may respond to our first prayer without delay or He may defer His favors days, weeks, or years. Neither does God act with all people in a like manner: He gives His graces in greater abundance to one than to another; but in all things He acts according to His wisdom and His justice. To one He gives five talents, to another, two or only one. Can he, who receives but one, have any cause for complaint? Evidently not, because what he has received is not due to him, but is a gratuitous gift of God's liberality. Instead of burying his single talent, he

[28] Mark xi. 24. [29] James i. 5, 6.

should strive to make it fructify and to double his first share in the division of his Father's wealth, and he should thereafter continue without faltering to multiply his gain. He will not be left unaided by God, so long as he relies upon His help in humble and devout prayer. Hence, whether we have received much or little, whether by birth or circumstances we have been placed in a high or humble position, let us rely on perseverance in our efforts and constancy in prayer, to steadily increase in us the gifts of God's liberality.

Scripture abounds with examples that teach us the usefulness of continuing to pray when God seems to have turned a deaf ear to our supplications, and that instead of abandoning our prayers we should importunate Him the more, with louder cries, in our distress. Remember the blind man of Jericho, who, hearing that Jesus was passing, cried out aloud: "Have mercy on me, Son of David," and the more he was warned to keep his peace, the louder were his repeated entreaties. His perseverance won him his sight." [30] Remember also the paralytic who waited for thirty-eight years for his turn to get into the pond Probatica, the waters of which cured the first man or woman that entered into them, after they had been agitated by an angel who, at times, descended from Heaven. After waiting thirty-eight years, he was healed by Our Lord.[31] Of all the miracles of Christ, there is none to inspire us with greater confidence of obtaining finally what we have long prayed for, than the miracle Our Lord wrought in favor of the Cananean woman, a stranger from Sidon or Tyre. This good woman implored our Blessed Lord in favor of her daughter, cruelly tormented by evil spirits. Jesus turned away His face and deigned not even to speak to her. How did she take this rebuke? She only cried the louder, and as she became importunate, the apostles asked the Savior to dismiss her. The Divine Master apparently heeding their demands, spoke to the woman and said: "I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel." Notwithstanding the second rebuke, the unfortunate woman approached and adored Him, saying: "Lord, help me." Jesus still refused her request, and said: "It is not good to take the bread of the children

[30] Luke xviii. 35 *seq.* [31] John v. 1 *seq.*

and to cast it to the dogs." This third rebuke did not disconcert the woman in the least, but still confiding in His almighty power and tender benevolence, she answered "Yea! Lord, but the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their master." The humility, confidence and perseverance of the woman, clearly and openly expressed in her words and her actions, finally won the heart of the amiable Redeemer, and He said to her: "Oh woman, great is thy faith; be it done to thee as thou wilt: and her daughter was cured from that hour." [32]

4. To obtain with certainty what we pray for, it is necessary that we should pray for ourselves. We should not conclude from this that we are not obliged to pray for others. Our divine Redeemer has taught us that the love of neighbor is imposed as a commandment, similar and secondary to that of the love of God, and therefore we are in duty bound to co-operate as far as we can to the salvation of our neighbor by our prayers. "Pray one for another that you may be saved, for the continual prayer availeth much," says St. James.[33] It is even more useful and meritorious to pray for others than to pray for ourselves, because our prayers in favor of others are a sacrifice very acceptable to God, provided we pray for one another, and then "the continual prayer availeth much." St. Augustine [34] and others agree on the doctrine that it is good to participate in the prayers poured out by saints (faithful), as God often hears their prayers which He would otherwise reject on account of our unworthiness. St. Chrysostom teaches the same thing, but gives the reason for it, when he says: "Necessity obliges us to pray for ourselves, charity inclines us to pray for our brethren; now, the prayer most agreeable to God is not the one which necessity addresses to Him, but the one which is recommended by charity." [35]

We would not have a St. Paul, says St. Augustine, if St. Stephen had not prayed for those who stoned him to death. Why then does St. Thomas require for the efficacy of our prayer that we pray for ourselves? Simply because we are never sure of the disposition of those for whom we pray.

[32] Matt. xv. 22 *seq.*
[33] James v. 16.
[34] Ep. 97.
[35] In Matt. Hom. 14.

If they are in the state of grace, then our prayers will avail much, especially so, if they reciprocate with their prayers the charity of their neighbor; but if they happen to be evil-disposed or are deprived of sanctifying grace, God is no longer bound to give efficacy to our prayers. Will our prayers then be lost? Undoubtedly not: for an act of charity is never lost and therefore the merit of the prayer will go back to its source, that is, if the person for whom prayers were addressed is not disposed to receive the favor asked for him, the suppliant will be the beneficiary. It is in that sense we must understand, says St. Thomas, the words of the Psalmist: "My prayer shall be turned into my bosom." [36] That is, if my prayer for those that persecuted me are not heard by God, I shall not be deprived of my reward.

5. That we ask things useful unto salvation. Spiritual goods, conducing to the end for which we were created, are the only things worthy of the attention of man; therefore they alone should form the direct aim and ultimate end of our prayers as well as of all our actions. Whatever is transitory is below the dignity of man who is created for eternity, unless what is transitory may be utilized to attain what is everlasting. From this we naturally conclude that among the things we may ask at all times, in all places and without ceasing and with all the ardor of our souls, as also without condition or reservation, are celestial goods, such as the grace to refrain from sinning, to remain always in the grace of God, to rejoice in His glory, to please Him in all things and to live and die in a saintly manner. In these and similar favors true wisdom is to be found, and man by tending to them with all his strength is made more perfect in the sight of his Master and therefore, the more man despises all worldly goods and all that is an obstacle to the attainment of his end, the more he approaches here on earth to that happy union with the infinite God, which is but a forerunner of an everlasting joy and union with Him in Heaven. These are the sentiments which the older Tobias strove to impress on the mind and heart of his son: "Bless the Lord, thy God, at all times," he said, according to the Greek text, "and beg of Him that thy ways may be made straight and that all thy

[36] Ps. xxxiv. 13.

steps and thy councils proceed properly and be seconded (by Him) . . . fear not, my son, we lead indeed a poor life, but we shall have many good things if we fear God and depart from all sin, and do that which is good." [37]

As we cannot of ourselves be certain that temporal advantages, such as fortune, riches, honors, success in worldly undertakings, health, a long life will redound to the honor and glory of God and to our spiritual welfare, it is not proper that we should ask them, unless with the condition that they may procure God's glory and the salvation of our soul. "We ask," says St. Thomas, "temporal goods on this condition, that God will not grant them, except in so far as they may be favorable to our salvation." [38]

6. With piety and devotion. Piety and devotion only differ in this, that devotion regards the service of God in general, whilst piety refers principally to the worship of God as our Father, although St. Thomas, following the Latin meaning of the word, defines *piety* "a moral virtue by which we are well disposed at heart towards parents and country." [39]

Piety regards the sentiments with which we should pray and refers not so much to the earnestness or to the intensity of our desire to obtain what we pray for, as to the ardor of the heart to honor God by an act of the virtue of religion.[40] Devotion as we shall see later is nothing else than a certain will promptly to offer ourselves for the things that regard the service of God. Meditation on the attributes of God and on His bounty towards us, His needy children, engender piety and devotion in our hearts. St. Thomas explains this fully: "Meditation," he says, "is evidently the cause of devotion, in so far as man through meditation resolves to dedicate himself to the divine service. He is moved thereto by a two-fold consideration: the first is that of the Divine Bounty and of its benefits, according to Psalm lxxii. 28: "It is good for me to adhere to my God and to put my hope in the Lord God;" and this consideration excites to love, which is the immediate cause of devotion. The second comes from the part of man who considers his deficiencies, and these oblige him to rely on God, according to Psalm cxx. 1: "I

[37] Tob. iv. 20, 23.
[38] 2.2.q.83 a.6 to 4.
[39] 2.2. q.101, 103.
[40] St. Thomas 2.2. q.82 a.3.

have lifted my eyes to the mountain, whence help will come to me from the Lord who made heaven and earth," and this consideration excludes presumption, by which one is prevented from subjecting himself to God, as long as he relies on his own strength. "The main effect of devotion is that it adds wonderfully to the merits of prayer, that is, devotion is not absolutely necessary to the efficacy of our prayers, but it makes them highly meritorious, this merit being proportionate to the devotion of the suppliant, as well as to the manner in which his prayers are performed. Moreover, who fails to see that devotion gives an impulse to all the faculties of the soul, the intellect, the will and the affections of the heart, which all concur in the exercise of prayer? It stimulates proper attention and entire confidence, promotes humility, animates the suppliant to despise worldly goods and to crave only what is celestial. It induces and constrains him to seek in prayer his neighbor's spiritual good as well as his own, not for a moment, but with persevering earnestness. Finally, it begets charity and it stirs up anew the flame of divine love, whilst charity, in its turn, perfects our devotion and enhances the merit of all our actions, and therefore of our prayer as well.

7. In charity. By charity we do not mean here as much the virtue, by which we are inclined to acts of the love of God and of neighbor, as the state of the soul that abides in charity or that charity by which we abide in God and God in us; or in other words, by charity we mean here the state of sanctifying grace, with which all the virtues, including charity, are infused into the soul. This charity makes the soul acceptable to God and an object of His predilection, for thereby "We are made partakers of the divine nature." [41]

Charity and sanctifying grace are not necessarily the same, although he who possesses the one has the other, as they are inseparable, but in Holy Scripture the word charity is often applied to what we call *"sanctifying grace,"* and by it we mean also the act of the love of God and the virtue that disposes us to love God and our neighbor for God's sake.

Charity or sanctifying grace is a quality of the soul,

[41] 2 Peter i. 4.

which is not essentially necessary to prayer, for he that is in the state of mortal sin can pray, but it is indispensable to its intrinsic efficacy. Prayer made in the state of grace, unless it lack the other qualities already mentioned, is always efficacious, because of God's promise; but he that is in the state of mortal sin, that is, in a state of enmity with and rebellion against the Supreme Majesty, has no right to be heard.

If we consider charity as a virtue infused with sanctifying grace, it prompts and induces us to desire most ardently the favors we pray for, and it moves our will to solicit especially those benefits which redound to God's glory and our salvation, and this again adds to the efficacy of the prayers of the just. Must the sinner then abandon prayer altogether or neglect it as useless? Far from it, for if the things he asks, regard his eternal welfare, and if he prays in a proper manner, he may be assured that his prayer will be heard, not for justice' sake, as if it were due to him, but for the sake of God's mercy. "God," says St. Thomas, "gives ear to the prayer of the sinner, when it proceeds from a good desire: He hears him, not for the sake of justice, for a sinner cannot deserve anything, but through pure mercy, because prayer in order to obtain what it asks, is not founded on our merits, but solely on the mercy of God." [42] Therefore we conclude: the just and the sinners must have recourse to prayer; he who is just, that he may persevere in the grace of God and the sinner, that he may obtain help and aid to abandon his sinful life.

8. With attention in vocal prayer.

Vocal prayer is prayer expressed either silently or audibly by words. Prayers said with the lips only are vocal prayers. Vocal prayers are of two kinds: private and public. Since public prayers, which are said by ministers of the Church, are intended for the edification of the people, they should be heard by them for whom they are said, as St. Thomas remarks, but as to private prayers, which are said by any particular person for himself or for others, it is not necessary that they be vocal.[43] Nevertheless vocal prayers have great advantages, which should not be overlooked:

[42] 2.2.q.83 a.16. [43] 2.2.q.83 a.12.

first, vocal prayer excites in us interior devotion and helps us to elevate our minds to God, for, says, St. Augustine,[44] "by words and other signs we excite ourselves more forcibly to increase our holy desires." Notwithstanding, if we find that words or signs distract our attention, we should dispense with them; then we should imitate the pious and devout Anna, who prayed in her heart;[45] secondly, we should have recourse to vocal prayer because the body also should aid in the worship of God, and this is especially useful in order to make prayer more meritorious; and thirdly, vocal prayers give vent to the pent up affections of the heart, which communicates, as it were, its pious sentiments to the body to let it partake of its spirit and makes it burst forth in joyous thanksgiving, according to the words of the Psalmist: "My heart hath been glad and my tongue hath rejoiced."[46]

While extolling the use of vocal prayer, we should not assume that praying with the lips is acceptable to God, even if we pray without due attention and devotion, for such a prayer is purely mechanical, as neither the mind nor the heart takes part in it. Our amiable Redeemer reproves even harshly the hypocritical Jews who prayed without proper affections: "This people," He said, "honoreth Me with the lips, but their heart is far from Me."[47] A prayer without proper attention loses thereby all merit and therefore we should imitate the Apostle, who, admonishing us how to pray, says: "I will pray with the spirit, I will pray also with the understanding; I will sing with the spirit, I will sing also with the understanding."[48] Although this text refers properly to public prayer, it is equally applicable to private prayer said with the lips or vocal prayer.

Let us not understand from this that prayers said with involuntary distractions are devoid of merit. We should distinguish two kinds of attention: virtual and actual. He that prays with his mind constantly fixed, either on God he addresses or on his petition, has an actual attention throughout, and this attention, as most useful to obtain what we desire, is worthy of our best efforts, but who is there who will

[44] Ep. ad Probum. [45] 1 Kings i. 13. [46] Ps. xv. 9.
[47] Matt. xv. 8. [48] 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

not admit that such an attention is practically impossible to the largest majority of the faithful? Therefore a virtual attention is sufficient. This consists in placing ourselves in the presence of God at the beginning of our prayer, with the intention of obtaining from God's goodness and mercy all we will ask. Even he, who moved thereto by the grace of God, disposes himself to pray, has a virtual intention, even if thereafter his mind should, on account of some weakness, wander about. St. Thomas [49] explains how far virtual and actual attention in prayer are equal in their effects, and also in what they differ. The effect of prayer, he says, is two-fold: the first is common to all good works performed in the state of grace, namely: to merit, and for this, continuous attention throughout the prayer is not necessary; for by virtue of the first intention, made when one undertook to pray, the whole prayer becomes meritorious, as is also the case with other good works; the second and proper effect of prayer is the obtaining of what we ask, and for this again the first intention is sufficient; the third effect is that produced at the very instant the prayer is going on and that consists in a certain spiritual refection or consolation of the soul. For this an actual intention is evidently required. This exposition of the Angelic Doctor should console those who are often involuntarily distracted during their prayers, for the two principal effects of prayer, the one of meriting for heaven, and the other of obtaining what is asked, are secured by a virtual intention; but it is also a warning to them who are voluntarily distracted whilst they pray; for it should open their eyes to the awful irreparable loss they sustain, as they lose the three effects of prayer, besides offending the Divine Majesty by their irreverence and indifference to their spiritual welfare, as if there could be anything of greater value than to converse with God, about the things regarding their eternal happiness.

Before concluding this article on attention during prayer, we must make a few remarks on attention in all vocal prayers to be said by religious or ecclesiastics, whether they bind under pain of sin or not. We except from these remarks liturgical prayers of the Church in the administra-

[49] 2.2. q.83 a.13.

tion of the sacraments, in the holy sacrifice of the Mass and in the particular blessings reserved to ecclesiastics.

Vocal prayers, especially if said aloud, are useful to excite in us interior devotion and help us to lift up our minds to God. "We address," says St. Augustine, "vocal prayers to God to arouse our attention by the sound of the words . . . to excite in us more effectively all holy desires." [50] Now we distinguish a three-fold attention in vocal prayer; the first consists in paying attention to the words in order to avoid mistakes in their pronunciation, the second consists in paying attention to the sense of the words, and the third happens when one attends not only to the words and to their meaning, but also to the end which one has in view in praying, that is, God and the favor that is asked. The first intention is sufficient for the fulfillment of the obligation attached to the different offices of religious or ecclesiastics or to other vocal prayers enjoined by the rule of any religious order, provided wilful distractions are avoided and the office was begun with an intent to pray or to fulfill one's obligation before God. We have seen already that such prayers are meritorious and are also efficacious. The second intention is greatly to be preferred because the meaning of the words is apt to produce pious affections in the soul, which will stimulate it to a more ardent love of God and of neighbor; but in order to obtain that desired effect, all prayers and especially those said by heart must be said slowly. The third is evidently the best manner of reciting vocal prayers in general, for whilst thinking of the favors we ask of God, we increase the desire of them and we directly honor and worship God, so that we forget all worldly considerations to occupy ourselves solely with what is celestial and enduring. This third manner of praying has the advantage over the second, in that we waste no time in striving to understand the full meaning of difficult passages, like those of the Psalms. Even uneducated people can think of their needs and of the Giver of all good, and such thoughts are more apt to excite pious affections. It is to the third manner of praying that St. Gregory principally alludes, when he says: "True prayer does not only consist in words, but also in senti-

[50] Ep. 121 ad Probum.

ments. It is not by words but by desires that our voice reaches more forcibly the ears of the Lord. And if we ask eternal life only with our lips, without desiring it from the bottom of our heart, no matter how hard we try, we remain dumb," that is, dumb to all intents, because God will not hear the prayers said with the lips only.

Many different ways are suggested to keep away distractions in our prayers. One is to gaze upon a large crucifix to rivet our attention, but this is not always practicable as large crucifixes are not always at our disposal. Another is to imagine that we assist at the Last Judgment when the accounts of our good and bad prayers are being scrutinized. Others again prefer to imagine an angel standing at their right, who makes a record of every one of their meritorious prayers, whilst the devil, on their left, jots down the least imperfection and grins with a fiendish joy, when he can score a sinful prayer, because of wilful distractions; but the most effective means perhaps for many, is the thought that the present prayer is possibly their last, and that their eternal welfare may depend on the manner in which they make it; for thus they are stirred up to greater devotion, as if they heard for the last time the warning of the priest in the Mass: *"Sursum corda"*—Lift up your hearts to God—to which they readily respond; *"Habemus ad Dominum"*—We have lifted our hearts to God. A short or ejaculatory prayer should always accompany our thoughts, to drive away troublesome imaginations; and we may either address it directly to God or to the Blessed Virgin or to some other saint, in whom we have great confidence, or finally to our Guardian Angel.

ARTICLE VII

Sixth Means of Perfection

Contemplation

Advantage of Contemplation to Speedily Arrive at Perfection—In what it Consists.

We have so far explained briefly the three principal exercises indispensable to spiritual progress, to wit: spiritual reading, meditation and prayer, and we will now consider the fourth, namely, contemplation. Let us recall their connection, as given by St. Bernard: by reading we seek, by meditation we find, by prayer we obtain and by contemplation we relish what we have sought, found and obtained.

We tend to perfection not only by the three first spiritual exercises, but by all the means at our disposal, of which we will speak hereafter, and when we have already attained that state of perfection, called the *unitive state,* of which we spoke in the first article of this Manual, and the love of God has been enkindled in our hearts, we must still continue to read, meditate and pray in order to increase day by day our soul's ardent love for our heavenly Father, and with that end in view, we see God Himself in spiritual reading, we find Him in meditation, we possess Him through prayer and we taste how sweet He is through contemplation, according to the Psalmist: "O taste and see that the Lord is sweet."[1]

We do not propose to touch upon and much less to discuss the miraculous delights vouchsafed by the Almighty to some souls of predilection during their ecstatic contemplations, like those mentioned in the lives of some saints or of other pious and exemplary Christians. The doctrine here laid down conforms to the teachings of Holy Scripture and forms a part of ascetic theology; but wonderful and miraculous manifestations of God's almighty power in favor of some saintly souls, either for their own good or for the

[1] Ps. xxxiii. 9.

welfare of their neighbor, can find no place in this Manual: they belong to what is called mystical theology, especially based on the experience of a few. Besides the doctrine laid down here is taught by the Angelic Doctor in his *Summa.*[2]

Hence, the contemplation of which we treat in this article is that to which all holy souls may aspire to inflame the ardor of divine love in their hearts, and to conform their aspirations to the desire of Our Lord, when He said, "I am come to cast fire upon the earth and what will I but that it be kindled."[3]

Contemplation differs from meditation, (a) in that it has God and His infinite perfections as a direct object, for the object of our contemplation is Divine Truth as far as we can understand it, and all truths to be realities must conform to the intellect of God. We cannot conceive the simple Truth which is identical with God's essence, but we see Him in His works and in His teachings, and our reason judges from effects to their cause, and thus we form concepts of God's attributes; but unaided by revelation we would be led into many false beliefs relating to God's nature. Whatever we may truthfully assert and attribute to God, may form the object of our contemplation, that is, His necessary and absolute existence and all His perfections. Meditation, on the contrary, has for object any truth by referring it to God as our Creator, Redeemer or our last end, provided it be apt to excite in us pious affections and be not a mere study of the divine perfections. (b) In meditation man considers attentively any religious truth or work of God, but preferably revealed truth; he penetrates its meaning, revolves in his mind its relations to God, to Himself and to those with whom he has intercourse in order thereby to excite in his soul pious thoughts and affections, which ultimately inflame his will for good. In contemplation we dispense with all these discursive operations of the mind, and like an eagle who fixes his sight on the brightest rays of the sun, he who contemplates fixes his intellectual sight on the Sun of Justice and on the divine perfections, which, like bright rays, radiate from it. (c) The principal end of meditation is to excite pious affections in our hearts,

[2] 2. 2. q. 180. [3] Luke xii. 49.

by which the will is moved to undertake virtuous deeds and to dedicate our whole being to God's service, whilst through contemplation, the ardent love of God which induces one to contemplate, is still more intensely roused and inflamed as well as purified and perfected. (d) Meditation, as its very name implies, cannot be properly undertaken without effort and careful preparation, whilst, in contemplation, all pains and labor are removed, whether one contemplates one single perfection or, in a general manner, all the perfections of God; whether one contemplates God as essential Light that illuminates all rational created beings or as essential Life from which all things take their life and activity, or as simple Truth, to which all truth must conform to be real or true, and finally whether one contemplates God with relation to His creatures, or His infinitely perfect nature and divine attributes, without reference to anything created by Him.

The nature of Contemplation. In what does contemplation consist? There are two kinds of contemplations, one in the natural or rather ordinary state, in which are found all Christians striving to save their souls, and one in the preternatural or superhuman state, as some authors prefer to call it. With contemplation in the preternatural or superhuman state, we are not concerned, for we repeat again that it belongs to mystic theology, and is foreign to the scope of our Manual. No one can place bounds or limits to the almighty power of God and therefore the miraculous manifestations of His wisdom, power, holiness and of His other attributes are not subject to rules, which man can digest by his intellectual faculties and draw from them conclusions for his guidance, nor can they be deduced from revealed truth, for the miraculous interventions of God are inscrutable and are hidden from man's mind. "Oh, the depths of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God!... How incomprehensible are His ways."[4]

We should also be convinced that man in his natural state cannot see the essence of God or see Him as He is. "No one," says St. Augustine, "who sees God can live a mortal life," for as long as the body is united to the soul,

[4] Rom. xi. 13.

no one can see God who is a spirit, nor can he represent to himself a spirit without figures or representations, although he may from these representations discover what is intelligible or true, or as St. Thomas calls it, the intelligible truth;[5] *e. g.*, we may represent God in our minds as an infinitely wise and just Monarch, whose rule extends over the whole created world, over the spiritual as well as the physical order, and from that representation we deduce many truths, such as the necessity of conforming our thoughts and actions to His holy will.

After these two preliminary remarks, made for the purpose of guarding against deception, we may say that contemplation rightly consists in an imperfect vision of the Supreme Being, and of His infinite perfections, or as St. Thomas has it: The contemplation of Divine Truth principally belongs to contemplative life for the reason that the end of this life is the perfect life hereafter. Now our sight of God is imperfect, because "We see now as through a glass and in a dark manner;" nevertheless, this present sight is, as it were, the beginning or forerunner of the future life, for "Then we shall see Him face to face. Now we know in part, but then, I shall know Him as I am known."[6]

Thus contemplation consists principally in an act of the intellect that steadfastly beholds the divine perfections, and to this intellectual sight the intellect is moved by the love of God; for the appetitive faculty of our soul begets the desire to behold what we love. For this reason St. Gregory describes contemplation as charity or the love of God, inasmuch as from the pure love of God the soul desires ardently to behold His infinite beauty and rejoices exceedingly in the sight. Therefore, contemplation ultimately terminates in love. "Thus love," says St. Thomas, "makes us seek God and having found Him, we delight, that is, through the contemplation of His beauty which we detect in all His perfections." St. Francis de Sales calls contemplation a loving, simple and permanent attention of the mind to divine things, or as the Angelic Doctor expresses it, to Divine Truth, which concerns God's essence and His attributes, made known to us by divine revelation.

[5] St. Thomas. 2.2.q.80 a. 5 to 2. [6] 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

There are according to St. Thomas four degrees in contemplative life, to wit: (a) the practice of the moral virtues; (b) all other acts or means of perfection; (c) the contemplation of God's works in the created world, in which His infinite perfections appear, and finally (d) the contemplation of the Supreme Being and of the Divine Attributes.

Let us try to understand the mind of the Angelic Doctor, as it seems opposed to what we learned concerning the four degrees of the spiritual exercises, which terminate in contemplation, viz: spiritual reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation.

(a) St. Thomas here speaks of the means to arrive at contemplation and the first of these means is the practice of the moral virtues, but to acquire the practice of the moral virtues and particularly that of the counsels, spiritual reading, meditation and prayer are indispensable, so that the three spiritual exercises are comprised in the first requisite for contemplation, namely, the perfect practice of the moral virtues. St. Bernard and St. Thomas are thus in perfect accord.

(b) By all other acts or means of perfection, St. Thomas means among others the frequent reception of the sacraments, special devotions, the exercise of God's presence, called also recollection, the subduing of our intellectual and sensual appetites, mortifications and the acts of the theological virtues, faith, hope and charity.

(c) The third means to dispose us to contemplation is what we may call the third step to it and leads directly to it: and that is, the contemplation of the works of God in the material as well as in the spiritual order. The Holy Scriptures and especially the Psalms, calling us to view the works of God's omnipotence, bounty, wisdom, liberality, holiness, justice and mercy, supply us with an abundant food to contemplate God's attributes in all His works and in His providential care of all He has made. His providence shines forth everywhere in the spiritual as well as in the material world, so that the Son of God could assure us that not a hair of our head falls without the will of His Father.

Pre-eminently, and above all the works of God's hands, stands forth the work of our redemption, for in it are clearly to be seen the designs of an all-wise, almighty, infinitely wise, bountiful, just and merciful God: His omnipotence, for what is more difficult than for a God to become man; His wisdom, by finding a way to reconcile justice with mercy; His holiness, by requiring that full and adequate reparation be made for the insults offered to His Divine Majesty by the sins of man; His bounty and liberality, by taking upon Himself to repair the ravages of sin and finally, the astounding ardent love for His image and likeness, with which He enriched the soul of man at his creation, by dying for the human race in rebellion against the King of kings. "Greater love than this no man hath than to lay down his life for his friends." [7]

(d) The last named work of God, the Redemption, in which His infinite perfections are more strikingly displayed than even in creation, directly leads to the contemplation of them and of Him, in whom they reside and from whom they emanate and flow as from their source, for what more natural than to proceed from the attributes of God to God Himself, in whom they are found in all their perfection?

What makes a pious soul have recourse to contemplation? Nothing else than the ardent love of Him, whom she has chosen for her Spouse, like the beloved of the Canticles: "I have found," she says, "Him whom my soul loveth, I hold Him and I will not let Him go." [8] Moreover contemplation is, according to the Angelic Doctor, delightful in itself for two reasons; the first regards the operation of the intellect; for it is pleasurable to act according to one's nature. Thus all men desire by nature to learn, and the knowledge gained affords satisfaction and delight; and both, the desire of knowledge and the delight which the latter procures, are further increased through the acquisition of greater wisdom and science. The second regards the object of contemplation, for it is very delightful to contemplate what we love, and if the object of our love is, according to our estimation, worthy of our greatest affection, our delight in its contemplation will proportionately be much

[7] John xv. 12. [8] Cant. iii. 4.

greater. Now, it is the love of God that induces us to contemplate Him, and if we love Him more than all else, even more than our life, as we should, for we can never love the infinite beauty of God as it deserves, the contemplation of His loveliness will exceed all other transitory delights derived from creatures or from purely natural sources. Then we really taste and see that the Lord is sweet.[9] What we have said of the contemplation of God applies even to our physical sight, for, as we remarked already, we take pleasure not only in the operation of seeing, which is pleasurable, because to see conforms to our nature, but the sight of a person we love gives us far greater pleasure. Moreover, the sight of a person dearly loved, further increases our love for him, and so it is with contemplation, for the more we contemplate God in His infinite perfections, the more ardent becomes our love and the greater is our desire to contemplate Him, together with an ever-growing delight in the exercise. Unhappily, the weakness of the will due to original sin, prevents, at least in part, any protracted contemplation, for, owing to the obscurity of the mind, our corruptible body pulls away the intellect from the things which are more suitable and appropriate to its nature, and forces upon its attention the cravings of the flesh: "For the corruptible body," says Wisdom, "is a load upon the soul and the earthly habitation" (that is the body) "presses down the mind that museth upon many things."[10] Notwithstanding this antagonism between the body and the soul—as God infinitely surpasses all the things of this earth—the delight caused by contemplation, although attended with difficulties, immeasurably exceeds all the joys that we can hope for from creatures.[11]

Having explained in what contemplation consists, we now consider its utility. Contemplation, in a strict sense, or contemplation of God or of His divine attributes is not necessary to perfection, for perfection, we have said, consists in this, that, after proper purgation from one's sins, one has subdued his passions so that they but seldom rise and are easily overcome; that one practices with ease the duties and virtues of his state of life, including the evangelical counsels,

[9] Ps. xxiii. 9. [10] Wisdom ix. 15. [11] St. Thomas l. c. a. 7.

as far as his obligations permit; that he remains free from mortal sins and commits no deliberate venial sins. Now, this state can be reached by the practice of the moral and divine virtues, for which suitable mortifications, the three spiritual exercises already explained, the sacraments and special devotions will provide adequate and efficacious help.

As for the contemplation of God's works, which the Angelic Doctor considers necessary as an immediate preparation for contemplation and indispensable to a perfect life, it is usually practiced in the meditation on the creation and end of man, on the mystery of the redemption through Christ, and on the life, teachings, passion and death of our Savior; for in all such and similar meditations the works of God are proposed for our serious consideration, to excite in us pious sentiments of devotion for the Source and Author of all that is good, and these sentiments are required for the active as well as for the contemplative life. Although contemplation is not absolutely necessary to perfection, we should not therefore despise or ignore it, for without making a deep study of it, we will easily find that it is salutary and praiseworthy and may contribute efficaciously to our spiritual advancement; hence, it must be acceptable to our Father in Heaven and may form the object and end of our most ardent prayers and best efforts. First, it is the love of God that influences those who have recourse to the pious exercise, as we have seen, and secondly, contemplation increases the divine love that moved the heart to it. We should not conclude from this, that contemplation should be attempted by everyone, for it is an exercise proper only to those who belong to the unitive state, and then only, when they are capable of it through the discursive consideration of the works of God, in which His infinite perfections are most clearly in evidence.

When the meditation on all that God has done in our behalf, in our creation, preservation, redemption and in all that tends to the eternal welfare of our souls, has so inflamed our hearts that we see in discursive consideration of the works of God, rather an obstacle to our ardent love, and that we feel inwardly moved to seek and behold in contemplation the Author of so much liberality, bounty, power,

wisdom and majesty, it would be a deplorable mistake to resist these salutary movements of the heart, which must then be ascribed to the influence of the Holy Ghost. Nevertheless we must guard against hallucinations and the wicked suggestions of the evil one, who may try to persuade pious and simple souls that they have become sufficiently perfect to contemplate, long before they have acquired the perfect practice of the virtues belonging to their state of life. Such pious souls may—although with less deplorable results—be awakened from their delusion, like the rebel angels who coveted equality with God, or like our first parents who aspired to the wisdom of God and thus to become gods. Had the angels been satisfied with their condition during their trial and had Adam and Eve been contented with the contemplation of God's works in the creation, its order and beauty, and its perfect adaption to their needs and to their lawful desires, and had praised and served the Creator because of His bounty towards them, there probably would be no history of the fall of many angels and of our first parents to record.

If pride or anything else besides the love of God induces contemplation, either contemplation is not true or real, or it is likely to bring disaster upon the soul. Therefore, before anyone attempts to contemplate, it is advisable that he first consult his confessor or spiritual director.

Whereas the love of God, which moves the soul to contemplate His infinite perfections, is the immediate and most necessary disposition of the soul to obtain any fruit from contemplation, we should learn what kind of love is required for that pious exercise. We distinguish several kinds of love for God: (a) the love of preference, (b) the love of friendship, (c) the love of benevolence, (d) the love of complacency, and (e) the love of contrition or of compassion. These different kinds of love will be fully explained in their proper place, when we will treat of charity, the most excellent of all virtues: here we speak of them only in their relation to contemplation.

(a) The love of preference is enjoined upon all Christians, but only in its two first degrees, viz.: to love God more than all created things, even more than our life, and

rather to lose all we possess, yea, life itself, than to offend Him by mortal or deliberate venial sin; but the third degree, namely to prefer the loss of all things rather than not to follow the evangelical counsels is required of them only, who have made the vow to observe them. Although not commanded, the counsels contribute greatly to spiritual advancement, and their observance, so far as one's state of life will permit, seems indispensable to obtain much fruit from contemplation; for without the practice of the evangelical counsels, the soul is too much attached to temporal goods to taste the heavenly delights experienced in contemplation.

(b) The love of friendship does not differ essentially from the love of preference, but it is a more intimate love, being based on the conviction that God returns not only love for love, but that an intercourse of love takes place between the soul that loves and her celestial Spouse, far more intimate than between friends upon earth: besides, since God is infinitely the richer of the two, His gifts of friendship are not measured by the friendly offering He receives, but by the disposition of the soul which gives what she can to her heavenly Spouse and only regrets that she cannot offer the whole world and the hearts of all men.

Under the latter aspect the love of friendship is nothing else than the love of benevolence.

(c) The love of benevolence springs from the love of friendship and consists, as the name itself implies, in the constant good will that God may obtain whatever He desires, and as He is infinitely rich and nothing can be added to His wealth, the benevolent soul desires to increase His exterior glory by the humble worship and sincere devotion of all rational beings, yea, like David, she calls upon the irrational animals, on living plants and on inanimate creatures to help glorify the Lord of heaven and earth.

(d) The love of contrition consists in the sorrow of the soul, because of the offences committed against the Divine Majesty, by the sins of man. When that sorrow regards the sufferings of our Savior or those of His Blessed Mother or those of other martyrs and saints, it is called love of compassion.

(e) Love of complacency, which consists in the knowl-

edge that God is infinitely amiable, infinitely lovable and hence is worthy of the boundless love, with which He loves Himself, and of all the esteem of men and of angels, the pious and devoted soul delights in loving a God so lovable. All that the mind of man esteems, all that may attract the heart of man, is found in God without limit as in its source. The Divine Architect planned the universe with all its variety, order and beauty, without other model than what He saw in His own perfections, and hence whatever attraction, excellence, amiability or perfection there is in heaven or on earth is but a shadow or a reflection of the boundless, limitless and immeasurable beauty of the self-existent Being, we call God.

The love of complacency is the most perfect love for God, because it conforms to the love God has for Himself, as far as we can conceive it by the light of revelation. It conforms therefore to the model God proposes for our love, and our most ardent love for our heavenly Father is but a feeble and imperfect imitation of the divine or eternal Love, which knows no bounds and neither beginning nor end. God's love for Himself can alone be called simply perfect or infinitely perfect, because He sees Himself and comprehends Himself as He is and therefore loves Himself with an infinite love.

The love of preference is not necessarily a perfect love, but cannot remain long imperfect, if one has arrived at the second and third degree of that love. In the first degree the love for God is usually founded on self-love, for our eternal welfare depends on the love of preference, in which our love for God essentially consists: without it there can be no true love, for God necessarily abhors a love by which He is placed on an equality with His creatures however perfect. The love of benevolence may likewise have a discordant note, in that it may be bestowed in expectation of receiving more than we give, and the same may be said of zeal, which springs from the love of benevolence, although it is capable of great sacrifices for the honor and glory of God. Fear may be the dominant sentiment in the love of contrition, and the love of compassion for the Savior's sufferings and death—even if it would melt one to tears—may be

robbed of most of its fruits, either because the Sacred Humanity alone is thought of, or because we, although conscious of Christ's Divinity, fail to excite in our hearts sorrow for our sins, which were the cause of the Redeemer's sufferings.

All those kinds of love become perfect, if the motive be one or all the perfections of God, for thus they become, like complacency, imitations of the Divine Love, the love of God for His infinite perfection. It is sufficient that the motive of our love for God be one infinite perfection. The reason therefore is that God being infinitely perfect in one attribute, is necessarily infinitely perfect in all His attributes and that in God there is in reality but one perfection, which includes them all, to wit: His infinitely perfect existence; for the name which God gave Himself is, "I am Who am." [12]

Perfect love of God directly leads to contemplation, for what can induce it more efficaciously than the love which has for motive the same God, considered in one or more of His infinite attributes? Still the love of complacency, which delights in God's amiability and loveliness, more than any other kind of love above mentioned, disposes pious souls to the contemplation of one or of several divine perfections, as it may be regarded as the beginning of contemplation; for when one possesses that love, contemplation becomes for him an exercise both easy and delightful, whether he dwells on a single perfection only or he considers in general all the perfections of God; but let it be noted that one should not be moved thereto by the desire to study them or through curiosity, but by a holy craving to taste their sweetness or, as Holy Scripture has it, "To taste how sweet the Lord is."

Example of a Contemplation on God's Perfections in General.

We have remarked that, to contemplate, one may choose one particular divine perfection or dwell on all the divine perfections in general. For the sake of brevity we will give an example of the latter manner of contemplation, as it is easier for most people; and learned people will find therein many subjects for a separate and distinct contempla-

[12] Ex. iii. 4.

tion. If we observe some order in our illustration, the order need not be necessarily followed, for each one must choose the truth best understood, so that contemplation may go on without effort. A meditation may precede contemplation and is always useful, if the doctrine on some particular perfection is not sufficiently understood, except if the heavenly Father disposes a privileged soul to contemplation by a special grace, which should not be too easily presumed.

God is and is necessarily all that He is. He alone is independent, for He depends on no one for His absolute and independent existence. His perfection therefore cannot be limited by anything as to time, place or as to the perfection itself, and therefore, He is eternal, always everywhere, and everywhere infinitely perfect. He is always the self-same as He is necessarily all that He is; therefore He is immutable. All things have been created by Him and therefore, depend on Him and on His holy will for their very existence and for all that they are.

In a meditation we would compare the immutability and independence and eternity of God with the dependent and precarious existence of all created things, as well as with their continual changes and mutations; but in contemplations we avoid comparisons and discursive considerations, and we rather admire lovingly His perfections and remain spellbound and charmed at the sight of so many wonders. This should be borne in mind throughout this illustration of a contemplation of the attributes of God in general.

God is truth. As a perfect being God has intellect and will. Truth is in the divine intellect and consists essentially in the conformity of the divine intellect to His adorable nature. God sees and comprehends Himself as He is, without a shadow of error, and without the slightest effort He sees all His attributes in all their perfection, and their beauty is fully comprehensible to Himself alone or rather the divine intellect beholds and contemplates without ceasing His divine nature in all its simplicity and boundless beauty, which is nothing else than His infinitely perfect existence and which contains all perfections as our feeble mind understands them; for in God there can be no composition in His faculties or His attributes, for these are all one, as we have

remarked already. Hence the intellect of God is His nature and both His intellect and His essence or nature are one and the same thing. God's contemplation of His essence makes Him supremely happy, for by His infinitely perfect intellect, He comprehends the boundless riches of His divine nature, to which His will is irresistibly attracted and which satisfies all His desires. This explains how ardently devout souls derive such great delight from an imperfect contemplation of God's beauty and loveliness, so that if the ordinary faculties of their intellect or will are only slightly raised above their natural power by a special grace of their celestial Spouse, they experience during contemplation an inexpressible charm and a wonderful rapture, which human language is unable to describe, and he, who has been thus favored, cannot explain to others the sweet feelings which ravished his soul.

Secondly, God is not only truth because His intellect and nature conform to each other, but all truth outside of God must also conform to the intellect of God. The intellect of God is thus, as it were, the rule and law which governs all things, existing or only possible. As all created things whatsoever depend on God and were brought into existence by His holy will; if they are real, they must conform to the intellect of God who conceived them. Therefore, all things that have ever existed, or ever will exist in the future are true, because they conform to the intellect of God, and likewise all concepts formed in our mind, even of created things, are true or truthful, if they conform to God's intellect, but false, if they are opposed to it.

God is light, but cannot be called light as He is called truth, if we understand by light that quality by which the sight is enabled to see. God's intellect needs no light to penetrate the darkest corners of all that exists. He is our light, for it is He who furnishes the light by which we see corporeal things with the aid of the sun and stars He has created for our use and benefit, as well as of any other artificial light; but in Holy Scripture He is especially called light, because His grace enlightens our understanding to make us see that His doctrine and His teachings, containing the revelation, are true, and therefore, Christ our

Savior is called the light of the world and the light that shone in darkness.[13]

God is life, without which there is but death. By His life He is always in action: He never rests, because He is never fatigued. He cannot add anything to His knowledge, for His wisdom that knows all things, understands and directs all things is infinite. His intellect sees not only the things that are passed, that exist at present and shall exist hereafter, but also an infinite number of possible worlds, which shall never become realities. From all eternity God's holy will has chosen among possible beings those that have existed, exist now or shall exist at some future time, and these were determined upon only by His holy will in accordance with His divine wisdom.

Our good God has communicated life to all existing things by creation and by preserving all things, which is a kind of continual creation; for if His providence could cease to act even for an instant, all things in the created world would fall into nothingness. It is "He who giveth to all, life and breath and all things....in Him we live, we move and are."[14] The spiritual life of the soul far exceeds in worth the natural life, as the latter is but human and the former is divine. If the soul lacks the former, it is worse than dead. By the natural life of the soul, which comprises its understanding, memory and will and the faculties depending on them, we think, we reason, we distinguish between good and evil, we form judgments and make decisions, and we will whatever we consider good, but the supernatural life of the soul is grace, and is a participation of the divine nature; it raises all virtuous acts to the supernatural and thus makes them meritorious for heaven; it places us among the beloved children of our heavenly Father, and it makes them who depart out of this mortal life, if clothed with it as with a bridal garment, fit to sit at the celestial banquet in which joy and happiness will reign for ever and ever.

Life is perfection, for it is undoubtedly more perfect to live than to be inert or dead, and to be capable of moving or acting than to receive one's motion from another being.

[13] John 1. [14] Acts xvii. 25, 28.

Thus we understand the greatness of the gift God bestowed upon man, when He breathed into the first man and woman a soul, which is chiefly man's life. If life is a perfection and God bestowed it upon man, it must necessarily exist in God; now, in what then does His life essentially consist and in what manner is it constantly in action?

In God there are two operations: one of the intellect and one of the will and these two essential perfections, which in reality are but one, are always in action, even before anything was made, even if God had never determined to bring forth anything out of nothing. By His intellect God comprehends Himself, as we said before, and this act in God is not sterile. He begets by the knowledge and contemplation of Himself, *i. e.,* of His divine nature, an image, a perfect likeness of Himself, and as God's contemplation of Himself never ceases, the concept thus formed is permanent, eternal and real. This concept is God. Thus He who comprehends the divine nature by an eternal act of His intellect, essential to His nature, is God and we call Him the Father and the concept or image formed by the Father's intellect is also God, and is called the Son; and in order to express the relationship between the Father and the Son, we borrow another expression in common use to indicate the relationship existing between a human father and his male offspring, and we say that the Father begot His Son from all eternity or the Son is the only-begotten of the Father.

Neither is the will of God—being likewise always in action, and being also necessary and eternal—unproductive and without permanent result, for we are taught that from all eternity the Father loves the Son, equal to Him in all things, being begotten of His own substance, and that the Son likewise loves the Father, of whom He is begotten; that mutual love is thus essential and eternal; it is a flame that always burns, an eternal reality, and that mutual love is the Holy Ghost, consubstantial with the Father and the Son and therefore God. As there is nothing in creation similar to the manner by which the Holy Ghost comes forth from the Father and the Son, we say that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son as from one common

principle. Now as the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost have a distinct personality, the Father is called the First Person, the Son the Second Person and the Holy Ghost the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, and as the three Divine Persons have the same divine nature, there are not three Gods, but the three Divine Persons are one and the same God. This is the mystery of the Blessed Trinity which will forever remain a fruitful theme for salutary contemplation, especially so when we behold it in connection with the mystery of the Incarnation, in which the Father "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all," to save us from sin and from hell, and "has He not also, with Him, given us all things?"[15] "O the depth of the riches and of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments; and how unsearchable His ways! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counselor? or who hath first given to Him and recompense shall be made him? For of Him, and by Him, and in Him are all things; to Him be glory forever, Amen.[16]

God is all-good. When we say that God is all-good, we mean that He possesses all perfections and that His perfections are boundless or without limit. God's goodness is infinite, for we call good whatever is desirable, but perfection is desirable and God being infinite in all His perfections, God is Goodness itself, or all-good. Therefore did the Savior teach us: "None is good but God alone,"[17] that is, God alone is by nature good: He is supremely good, as all created good, or the good found in creatures, is good only by participation of God's infinite goodness, and He is the efficient cause of all the good found in the works of His hands.

To goodness belongs not only to be good, but also to understand and love goodness, our heavenly Father is infinitely good. He fully comprehends His infinite goodness and loves it infinitely and in this His supreme happiness consists, as He delights in the possession of the Infinite Good. What is more, He sees in His own perfect nature myriads of worlds peopled with an indefinite number of beings, which He may

[15] Rom. viii. 32 *seq.* [16] Rom. xi. 33 *seq.* [17] Luke xviii. 19.

bring forth out of nothing if He so determine, whilst each being would possess a certain perfection proper to its individual existence and proportionate to the end which infinite Wisdom has in view for the general good of all His creatures. We do not know what there is far beyond the universe which we behold in silent admiration. Are there many other worlds beside the one of which we form a part? Who can solve the question, except He who made all things? What we do know is that God brings forth all things for His own honor. In this we recognize again God's goodness, or we may call it also His holiness, as there is in it a principle of the moral law which is unassailable, for God seeks primarily His own glory, and secondarily, the good of His rational creatures by amply rewarding their faithful service.

We call the attributes of God, which incline Him to will our good, His infinite bounty and we call it justice when He gives to each one his due according to each one's merit; and we call it mercy when He forgives the penitent sinner; but the mercy of God is extolled by the inspired writers of the Holy Scriptures over all the works of His hands, as if He only resorted to just punishment, when His infinite wisdom demands it. God is just and holy and therefore demands the wilful submission of all rational creatures, but He requires only a minimum of service for a quasi-infinite reward, a few years of submission to His holy will for an eternity of glory, and for such superabundant delights, that St. Paul after Isaias could write: "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath in entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." [18]

Irrational creatures also serve God by keeping the laws which govern their actions, or if they are incapable of action, they serve as instruments for the use, benefit or enjoyment of rational creatures, and thus the physical world and all things therein are said to bless and sing the praises of the Lord of heaven and earth, because they follow the law of their nature, which is good, and of which the Master of the universe is the sole source and efficient cause.

The God of infinite bounty wishes to communicate a

[18] Cor. ii. 9.

share of His goodness to rational creatures of His choice, and this inclination of our heavenly Father explains the creation of angels and of men, but nothing can prove more clearly His ineffable bounty for the human race that the Incarnation and Redemption by the suffering and death of His only-begotten Son Jesus. These considerations often form the theme of our meditations and the truths which they disclose to our mind present to the pious and loving soul an inexhaustible source for all the degrees of contemplation.

From the essential goodness and infinite perfection of God we deduce all His essential attributes: unity, eternity, immensity, immutability, incomprehensibility, omnipotence, ineffability,[19] to which we may add, wisdom and holiness. As we have alluded to or partly explained these perfections when speaking of the contemplation of God's attributes in general, we do not deem it necessary to explain them here in detail, mainly because they are often the subject of our pious meditations.

May our readers bear in mind what we have already stated, that contemplation is not necessary to our advancement in perfection, although it helps wonderfully to increase the love of God in the hearts of those who have arrived at the unitive state of perfection, whilst spiritual reading, meditation and especially prayer, should, ordinarily speaking, never be omitted, no matter what degree of perfection one may have attained.

[19] First Council of Lateran.

ARTICLE VIII

Seventh Means of Perfection

The Presence of God

I. What is Understood by the Presence of God—II. Utility of the Presence of God Proved by Holy Scripture—III. A Means to Avoid Sin and to Increase Charity—IV. Different Manners of Placing Ourselves in the Presence of God—V. Wanderings of the Imaginations—How to Repress Them.

I. We have stated that it is necessary to place ourselves in the presence of God, to properly prepare for the three first spiritual exercises: spiritual reading, meditation and prayer, and as for contemplation, God is always present to the minds of those who have recourse to that most excellent practice. Recollection as employed by the masters of spiritual life, is nothing else than an effort of the memory to regain the consciousness of God's presence, which has been temporarily lost, either through distractions or ordinary occupations; and by the state of recollection is meant the habitual frame of mind, which being freed from all worldly attachment, occupies itself totally with things that regard the service of God and the salvation of souls. This state of recollection is, we have seen, one of the remote means to insure a fruitful meditation and, if properly practiced, is by itself a sufficient preparation. Since wood kept dry is easily ignited, likewise a soul detached from all that is temporal—a detachment, which habitual recollection causes and promotes—is easily set on fire and is promptly inflamed with love for God, when any truth or anything else reminds it of His presence. God is indeed present, in all things that exist, by His essence, His knowledge and His power: nothing escapes His all-seeing eye, and, by His providence, He preserves everything He has made, so that not a hair falls from our heads unless He wills it. This presence of God is always the same whether we advert to it or not, but when there is question in this chapter of the presence of

God, we mean that presence of which we are conscious and which becomes a means of perfection, because of our advertence to the divine presence within us, around us and in all things that come under our observation: "In Him we live, we move and are."[1]

The usefulness of this presence of God is aptly shown in examples taken from the physical world. True, analogies found in spiritual and material things, if verified in the latter, do not prove the truth of the former; but they serve as illustrations of supernatural truths, and who will assure us that what we observe in this physical order was not intended as an objective lesson of heavenly truth? Thus our Savior calls Himself the vine and His apostles and the faithful in general the branches thereof. Unless the branches are attached to the vine, they can bear no fruit. Now, how are we attached to God? Principally, through the love of Him. But that love cannot be sustained unless we habitually remain in His presence by the remembrance of Him and by the consciousness that He is within us and in all we behold outside of us.

There are many other examples in the physical world which remind us of the necessity and efficacy of recollection, such as the waters that flow from a spring: they are the purer and the more abundant, the closer they are to their source, and the rays of the sun are the brighter and warmer, the nearer they are to the center of light and heat; so likewise, if by our thoughts and the consciousness of God's presence, we closely approach Him who is the source of all graces, and the center of all spiritual life and warmth, the more will our understanding be spiritually enlightened and the more will our hearts be inflamed with love for Him.

II. Love is proved by deeds of love and good actions lose all or the greater part of their merit, unless the end to which they are directed be good and we advert to it. Whereas God must be the end of all that we do, if we desire perfection in all our actions, we must also remember Him whose love we have principally in view. Therefore the Lord said to Abraham: "I am the omnipotent God, walk in My presence and be perfect,"[2] that is if you wish to be perfect, you must

[1] Rom. xvii. 28. [2] Gen. xvii. 1.

walk in My presence, intimating by this, that the habitual remembrance of God's presence is the safe road to perfection. To act always in conformity to God's holy will, in which, as we shall see later, consists the essence of a perfect life, we need His grace to direct us. How shall we obtain it? "In all thy ways think of Him," says the Wise Man, "and He will direct thy steps."[3] Do you desire to persevere in doing good and to obtain the necessary aid from on high in your most difficult undertakings, then "seek ye the Lord, and be strengthened: seek His face evermore."[4] Finally we are taught that the presence of God should accompany all our good and virtuous deeds: "I will show thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requireth of thee: verily to do judgment and to love mercy and to walk solicitous with the Lord."[5]

We may add to these citations the praises bestowed by the Holy Ghost on Noah, because of his being attentive to the presence of God: "Noah was a just and perfect man in his generation. He walked with God" says Holy Writ, that is he constantly remembered God's presence.[6] No more perfect example of the continual remembrance of God's presence can be found than in the prophet David. This holy man never could forget his God after his conversion; he saw Him in all things, as his psalms testify, so that he could truly say: "I set the Lord always in my sight,"[7] for he had Him always before his mind in all his undertakings.

III. If we wish to examine the efficacy of the presence of God, we shall find it the most powerful means to avoid all voluntary sins and in a large measure, even all imperfections. David thought of God to avoid all danger of sinning: "My eyes," he said, "are ever towards the Lord; for He shall pluck my feet out of the snares."[8] Why does the sinner not repent of his evil ways and return to God? Because, says the same prophet, "God is not before his eyes" and therefore "his ways are filthy at all times."[9] This explains the cause of all spiritual miseries. If we had God constantly before our eyes, the difficulty of resisting our evil inclinations and the temptations of the devil could be

[3] Prov. iii. 6. [4] Ps. civ. 4. [5] Mich. vi. 8.
[6] Gen. vi. 9. [7] Ps. xv. 8. [8] Ps. xxiv. 15. [9] Ps. ix. 26.

easily overcome; for if we remember the all-holy, the all-just God and the hatred He bears to sin, how could we offend Him? or having sinned, repentance would soon overtake us. "There is nothing more deplorable and more serious," says St. Ephrem, "than the forgetfulness of God," and St. Chrysostom gives the reason thereof: "If we consider," he says, "that God is everywhere, that He sees and hears all, not only deeds and words, but also whatever is in the heart and at the bottom of the soul—for He is judge of thoughts and desires—we will do nothing evil, we will not say or think anything evil." [10]

This means of avoiding any wrong-doing was already well understood by the Pagan philosophers. Since they had no God, according to their belief, who could inspect the hearts of men, they bethought themselves of a scheme of avoiding sin, by placing before the imagination an honest man, witness of all their thoughts and actions. This subterfuge to escape wrong-doing was first thought of by the libertine, Epicurus, according to Seneca, who advises his friend Lucilius to adopt the artifice: "It is necessary," he wrote, "to choose an upright man and to always keep him before our eyes, in order to live and to do all things in his presence as if he saw us. Most of our faults would be eliminated, if they only could be committed before a witness." [11]

If those two Pagan philosophers, whose lives in many things contradicted their teachings, found in an imaginary witness a secure refuge against secret vices, what should we think of the real presence of God to make us persevere in virtue? The weight of this crushing argument should terrify the sinner, if he adverts to his belief that God not only penetrates by His all-seeing eye the most secret corners of his conscience, but will be one day the inexorable judge of all his thoughts, words and actions.

Imbued with the faith of the divine presence, the chaste Susanna overcame the vile suggestions of two lecherous judges. The prophet Daniel relates [12] that Susanna, the wife of the rich and respected Joachim, one of the Babylonian captives, was wont to walk in her garden when the people

[10] Hom. viii. ad. Phil. 2. [11] Ep. 11. [12] Dan. xiii. 1 *seq.*

who came to consult her husband had left. The two judges who had watched her frequently, became enamored of her and were inflamed with lust towards her.[13] Note here how sin entered into their hearts: for: "They perverted their own minds and turned away their eyes that they might not look up to heaven, nor remember the just judgments."[14] And thus they strove to avoid the thought of the presence of God. One day the two elders, who had hid between the trees and plants of the garden, finding Susanna alone, said to her: "Behold the doors of the orchard are shut, and nobody seeth us."[15] When they had made known to her their vile intent and threatened her with a false accusation, Susanna sighed and said: "I am straitened on every side; for if I do this thing, it is death to me and if I do it not, I shall not escape your hands. But it is better for me to fall into your hands without doing it, than to sin in the sight of God."[16] The remembrance of God's presence saved Susanna from sin and her confidence in His protection delivered her from the wicked judges, who by false testimony succeeded in having her condemned to death. Daniel, at that juncture, proved that the two judges had given false testimony; Susanna was freed, and the two elders suffered the just punishment of their perjury.

The exercise of the presence of God is not only a preventive of sin, but a great aid to increase in us the fire of divine charity, and this happy result, although obtained indirectly, is nevertheless easily secured, for the remembrance of the divine presence stimulates the fervent Christian to do all things well under the eyes of his Maker and aids him wonderfully in the practice of all the virtues of his state of life, while the Christian virtues, as we have remarked before, necessarily lead to the love of God. St. Laurence Justinian thus explains our meaning: "I am persuaded," he says, "that in order to obtain the purity of heart, to practice all the virtues and to overcome the temptations of the flesh, always at war with our reason, there is no means so efficacious than that of thinking that we are always under the eyes of the Supreme Judge who sees all things."[17]

[13] *Ibid.*, 8. [14] *Ibid.*, 9. [15] *Ibid.*, 20. [16] *Ibid.*, 22, 23. [17] Perf. c. 6.

Recollection procures also directly the same love of God in those devoted souls who, having attained the state of perfection, are inclined to a short but amorous contemplation of God's perfections, whenever they place themselves in the presence of their heavenly Spouse. Their love then expresses itself in a tender colloquy, if the occasion permits it, or if not, in an ejaculatory prayer or in a divine praise. It is indeed difficult to conceive how ardent souls, entirely devoted to God, could remain cold and indifferent at the recollection of Him they love so dearly. We should not forget that God Himself is touched by the devotion of those who seek His presence always and everywhere, and that He richly rewards their pious thoughts. The nearer we approach Him, the more readily does the Holy Ghost descend into our souls to adorn them with rich gifts and especially with divine charity, by which we are closely united to Him. As it is impossible for anyone to approach a fiery furnace without feeling its heat, it is likewise impossible to go near our bountiful God in the consciousness of His presence, without experiencing the effects of the fire that burns in the heart of God for those who truly love Him.

IV. We come now to the divers manners of placing ourselves in the presence of God, for they are means to make recollection as permanent as it is possible.

1. The first and most practical way of placing ourselves in the presence of God consists in an act of faith, by which we firmly believe that God is in us, around us and everywhere; we also place ourselves in His presence, when we confess that in Him we live, and move and are, according to the saying of St. Paul, already quoted; for the presence of God is nothing else than the consciousness that God sees us and knows all things, even our secret thoughts and movements of the heart. Faith teaches us that wherever we go, yea, even wherever our thoughts can reach, we are in the immensity of God and that He watches all our doings, as if there were nothing else to attract His attention. This first manner may vary somewhat, when we look at or think of things outside of us. We may see God in all beings and

this is especially useful, if we contemplate the heavens, the stars, plants, trees or flowers, or anything that attracts our admiration, and if, at the same time, we are conscious that God made all we see for each one of us, what sentiments of wonderment, gratitude and love, the near presence of God will engender in our hearts! Thus David, imbued with these pious emotions begotten of the presence of God, called upon all things in sight and upon the angels of heaven to praise the Lord, and like sentiments imposed upon many saints the inward feeling that all created things called upon man to love their Creator. Thus, as St. John Climacus well remarks, we find that "every creature is a ladder to raise us to God."

2. A second means of placing ourselves in God's presence, consists in representing Him in the interior of our souls, or in considering our souls the temple in which He dwells in all the majesty with which He is surrounded in heaven, according to the admonition of St. Paul: "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" [18] God is everywhere, it is true, but He exercises His will and power in a different manner in our soul than in any other creature upon earth; for through sanctifying grace the soul partakes in some manner of the Divine Nature, [19] and the Holy Ghost dwells in the soul raised to a supernatural and ineffable state. Is it not befitting that in that heavenly abode, our souls should rear an altar and offer thereon the gold of our adoration and the incense of our prayers, as well as our most pious praises as so many precious stones? It is there the Divine Majesty will give intimate and familiar audiences, not at stated times, but whenever we choose, and it is there that secret colloquies will take place in the intimacy of the warmest friendship. It behooves us to keep the gates of our interior shut, so that no intruder may distract the state of familiar intercourse or bar the tender union between the needy soul and her rich Spouse. The most serious and often irresponsible intruder is our wandering imagination, which harassed the mind and heart of Job and forced from him the strange and humiliating admission, that has been repeated through the ages by

[18] 1 Cor. iii. 16. [19] 2 Peter i. 4.

all those who aim at perfection: "The dissipation of my thoughts has been the torment of my heart." [20]

3. A third manner of holding ourselves in the presence of God is to have recourse to the imagination to represent to our minds God Himself, not as a Being necessary and absolute, as well as infinitely perfect in all His attributes—for this belongs to the love of complacency or to the exercise of contemplation—but as He appeared to Moses, Abraham, St. Paul and others, or in a burning bush, or as speaking from the clouds or from a mist. The advantage of this manner of recollection is, that the representation consisting of a sensible form, is more apt to attract and sustain our attention. There is nevertheless, this objection that God Himself is then represented only by a fire, a wind, a cloud, a voice, etc. Therefore it is suggested to choose rather a representation of the Savior, the Son of God, who being God and man fulfills the requirements of a most vivid and lasting picture and figure, capable of restricting the flights of a wandering imagination. In order to insure the proper advantage of such a representation, we should in preference choose a form or state of our Lord that will excite in us the most pious, lively and effective sentiments of the heart. Some are more easily moved at the sight of the Infant Jesus whom they love to press to their heart; others are more inclined to behold the Divine Teacher in all His humility, patience and meekness among the lowly and impressionable Jewish people; others again are more easily touched at the sight of the Redeemer during His passion, in His agony, when standing before Pilate or at the Ecce Homo, or when carrying the Cross or hanging thereon and bleeding to death, etc. Others again prefer to adore the Savior in His glory surrounded by all the splendor of the heavenly court. The different representations will excite in the beholder corresponding affections, all tending to a greater gratitude and more fervent love for the divine Benefactor. This manner of recollection based upon the majesty, glory, goodness, bounty, benignity and mercy of God, is, as we have seen, the immediate preparation for contemplation and if it be accompanied by acts of gratitude, of oblation of one's self, of

[20] Job xvii. 11.

compassion, of prayer and ardent love, it leads, according to St. Teresa, to purity of heart and to a high degree of contemplation, provided it be done without effort and without tiring the mind. The end of the three ways of keeping ourselves in the presence of God is to prevent dissipation caused by numberless trifles which distract our attention, and to restrain, as far as we can, the ramblings of the imagination, which prevent proper interior recollection so necessary to our spiritual progress. Therefore, each one must choose for himself the best means to oppose the natural dissipation of his mind. When we are at work among the beauties of nature, or when we are walking in the fields or garden, as the scene is constantly shifting and makes new impressions on our mind, we should use the first manner of being recollected, that is, by seeing God in all things. When we are alone and free from manual occupations and other cares, we may choose either of the other two manners of remaining in God's presence, but after Holy Communion, the second manner should be chosen; for then heaven is within us and the celestian court is transferred momentarily to our bosom, and if we are in a church or chapel where the Blessed Sacrament is kept, we should have recourse to the last manner, because then we have before us the Real Presence or the same Savior of whom we only seek a remembrance or a representation in any other manner, except the one we have recommended for adoration after Holy Communion. When we kneel before a tabernacle, where the Savior reposes and is adored by a mulitude of angels, we cry out with David: "As the eyes of servants are on the hands of the masters, so are our eyes unto the Lord our God, until He have mercy on us,"[21] and enrich our needy souls with His priceless gifts.

V. On account of our manifold occupations that take our attention from God and the vagaries of our imagination, it is morally impossible without a special grace from God—as in the case of the Blessed Virgin—to remain constantly recollected; nevertheless, they who tend to perfection should be recollected as much as their state and condition permit, sighing for the moment when they shall see God face to

[21] Ps. cxxii. 2.

face and shall, without ceasing and without distractions, contemplate the beauties of God's infinite perfections.

There are several remote means highly recommended, by which we may attain a high degree of recollection.

(a) The first lies in repressing as much as possible the wanderings of the imagination by mortifying our curiosity or the desire to see everything, to hear everything and to know everything. Unhappily, whatever we perceive through our senses, is kept in the store-house of our memory, and our imagination brings it before the mind in the midst of our prayers and meditations and throughout our minor occupations. Since useless and evil imaginations are brought out from memory's store-house more often than pious thoughts, we may well ascribe the annoyance to the evil one and to our evil inclinations. Therefore we should correct our curiosity for all things useless, restrain our eyes and keep them from vain and frivolous sights, watch over our tongue and keep it from being too loose and inquisitive, watch over our thoughts to keep them from rambling and watch over all our senses that no vain impressions may reach them to be taken up with avidity by the imagination, and to be transmitted by it with its own vagaries to memory's store-room.

(b) We should likewise correct the attachments of the heart, of which our imagination is a tool, if not a slave, for the latter accompanies the former everywhere, like a faithful servant his exacting master. To be convinced of this we have only to remember persons of whom we were inordinately fond or persons for whom we had a pronounced aversion, and we will see that in the first case we love to think of them and imagine various things by which we may please them; and in the latter case, the same imagination invents a thousand reasons to prove that we are right in our aversion and in our determination to avoid the company of those we dislike; and so it is with all our evil inclinations, our pride, our avidity of success in our undertakings, our attachments to worldly goods, honors and amusements and a thousand other frivolities. Thus detachment from all things that are not conducive to our eternal welfare, is imperious, if we wish to arrest a great part of the vagaries of our imagination.

(c) In order that the dissipation of our thoughts may not become the torment of our hearts, which we might not be able to conquer like the holy man Job,[22] we should combat the wanderings of our imagination by a prompt, peaceful but energetic diversion, accompanied by a humble and ardent ejaculatory prayer. Above all, let us not be annoyed by distractions or the vain thoughts that assail us, for there is nothing that pleases Satan more than to see us lose peace of mind. Nevertheless, we should promptly arrest any wanderings of the imagination and create a diversion by lifting our hearts to God and by begging Him by short and ardent prayers to come to our aid. Such was the prayer of David, which the anchorites in the desert repeated so frequently and which is still kept up in the offices of the Church, said by ecclesiastics and religious: "O God come to my assistance; O Lord make haste to help me."[23] St. Augustine tells us that the monks of the Egyptian desert used frequently these ejaculatory prayers to maintain proper recollection, which was done without fatigue and maintained the necessary attention in praying,[24] and St. Chrysostom recommends them as a means to avoid all temptations of the devil: "If you become," says he, "inflamed with love by frequent prayers, you will give no room to the devil, nor entrance to his thoughts."[25] Every one can with facility exercise himself in the practice of ejaculatory prayers with a little good will. We recommend especially the committing to memory those ejaculatory prayers which have been richly indulgenced by the Church. Many Fathers of the Church have so greatly esteemed the short ejaculatory prayers, that they preferred them to prolonged meditations, because they are exempt from the wanderings of the imagination to which long prayers and meditations are subject, and consequently, the devil has no opportunity to inject, among frivolous and fanciful thoughts, representations of persons, pictures and scenes that awake the passions of the soul and rouse the evil inclinations of the flesh. Cassian said of his religious: "They think it is more useful to make short and very frequent prayers, because, by addressing the Lord more

[22] Job xvii. 11. [23] Ps. lxix. 2. [24] Ep. 2 ad Probam, c. 10.
[25] Hom. 4 de Fide Anna.

frequently, we are united more intimately to Him, and also, because by the shortness of our prayer, we avoid the darts which the tempter, the devil, seeks to cast at us especially during meditation."[26] St. Chrysostom thinks likewise.[27]

(d) A fourth means by which we may preserve proper recollection during the many occupations of the day is to offer up each action to God, protesting in His presence that we are about to undertake the work, with the sole desire of pleasing Him, by accomplishing His holy will. This intention of conforming ourselves to the will of God in all things, should be done at the commencement of every new occupation, not only to obtain God's grace, but also in order that the labor attached to it may be more meritorious. The same intention may be renewed during the same work several times with David's invocation: "O God come to my assistance; O Lord make haste to help me." Such and other ejaculatory prayers, frequently renewed, inflame the heart with love for God, for through them we sacrifice our will and inclinations to serve Him more faithfully.

(e) The fifth means to preserve recollection, especially recommended to people constantly employed with worldly affairs, consist in having recourse, once or twice a day, to a solitary place in the house or garden, where they may entertain their God and be entertained by Him. This is the true recreation time for those who are kept busy during the largest portion of the day with their temporal interests; for it is nothing else than a spiritual refection after the labor of the mind or of the body. The time to be given to such short retreats, must necessarily depend on the leisure time one has at his disposition; but even a few moments snatched from one's occupations to converse with the Lord of heaven and earth, whom the soul tenderly loves, cannot fail to draw down rich blessings from on high. Speaking of such a soul, the prophet Osee puts these words in the mouth of God: "Behold, I will allure her and will lead her into the solitude and I will speak to her heart."[28] Thus the Lord acts with pious souls, who give up the busy world around them, to hear the communications their celestial Spouse has to impart to them.

[26] Inst. Monach., L. 2., c. 10. [27] *Loc. cit.* [28] Osee ii. 14.

ARTICLE IX

Eighth Means of Perfection

Frequent Confession

Frequent Confession a Means of Perfection—To Obtain Purity of Heart, Frequent Confession is Necessary—Contrition—Perfect and Inperfect Contrition—Conditions of a Good Confession—General Confession.

We do not intend to explain in this chapter the Catholic doctrine regarding the nature, institution and effects of the sacrament of Penance. Since Penance as a sacrament is absolutely necessary unto salvation for all those who have been baptized and have thereafter fallen into mortal sin, provided they have an opportunity to receive it, our readers are supposed to be well instructed in the teachings of the Church regarding it. The end of this Manual is not merely to show the way to eternal life, a destiny to which all people of whatever race and condition are called, but to lead to perfection those who by a special grace of God strive for it.

I. Confession is a means of grace, of both actual and sanctifying graces; but it is not necessary that one should be in the state of mortal sin to receive the salutary effects of the sacrament. Habitual or sanctifying grace is the supernatural life of the soul, which is supernaturally dead if it be deprived of it, and without it the soul can make no progress in virtue nor tend to perfection. A soul in the state of grace receives through Penance abundant graces and is purified more and more, at each reception of the sacrament, of its lesser venial sins and of its imperfections; for if it be received with the proper disposition, it cannot lose its effects for which it is mainly instituted, viz: of cleansing the soul from sin and from all its impurities.

There are other ways by which the stains of venial sin

may be washed away, and that is done indirectly by all the sacraments; also by the sacramentals and by all meritorious acts of the moral and divine virtues, for whatever increases sanctifying grace in us, indirectly remits venial sin, provided we have at least a virtual or implicit detestation of our sins; but Penance—and in case of danger of death, Extreme Unction as well—is of itself sufficient to directly remit all sins, venial as well as mortal; for that is the end for which the sacrament was instituted. Therefore, it is proper that we should frequently have recourse to the sacrament of Penance, which was principally intended to purify the soul from all stain of sin, and as we sin daily, daily confession may be resorted to in communities in which there is an abundance of confessors. Often when two or three missionary priests travel together, they go to confession daily, not only to remain free from sin, but also to preserve among themselves the apostolic spirit.

We should confess frequently because we sin frequently, "For in many things, we all offend."[1] "Man in the state of grace can," says St. Thomas, "avoid all mortal sin; it is also possible for him to avoid venial sin, but not all,"[2] and the reason is, that owing to the frailty of our nature, our rigorous attention to things supernatural relaxes, and because of our many occupations, our solicitude and care slacken and thus, even religious and devoted hearts cannot avoid every sin.[3]

It is of the greatest importance that we should as far as possible guard against the danger of sin. This danger comes from two causes: one must be attributed to the occasions of sin, which should be avoided, and the other lies in ourselves. We will examine the latter first.

(a) Our first care relates to our interior disposition that we may preserve the purity of heart, and the second relates to the purity of intention in all our actions.

When we speak of purity of heart, as an effect of frequent confession, we understand by it the affections of the heart, which can be reduced to four: love and fear, joy and sadness, and in order that those affections may be the means of preserving us from sin, we should in all things con-

[1] James iii. 2. [2] P. 3, q.87 a. 1 to 1. [3] St. Leo, Ser. 4, *De Quadrag.*

form our sentiments to the spirit of Christ and to His holy doctrine. We have learned that the spirit of the world is contrary to the maxims of the Gospel. Therefore, what the world loves, a pure heart will fear and detest, and what the world fears, a pure heart loves and ardently desires. Likewise, the loss of temporal goods or of an honorable and lucrative position, sickness and other misfortunes sadden the heart of the wordling, but the pure heart of a follower of Christ rejoices in humiliations and in the midst of its afflictions, it praises God because His holy will has been fulfilled. A pure heart not only submits to all God's designs, but when tribulations come, it says with the Apostle: "I exceedingly abound with joy in all my tribulations."[4] A pure heart fears God and has no other fear, but it is a fear tempered with love, for its humility of mind and heart deeply rooted in the soul by its experience of the past, makes it diffident of itself and thus fears that without the aid of the Father it loves, it may offend Him by sin. It loves in one word what God loves and detests what He detests. It loves its neighbor because he is a child of our common Father and is beloved by Him. It compassionates the sorrows of others and rejoices in their good fortune. Thus the good will of God governs all the sentiments of the man with a pure heart. This purity of heart is one of the most important means of perfection. "It is a duty for us," says Cassin, "to undertake all that may lead to the purity of heart and to avoid all that may deprive us of it. It is for it, we do and suffer all things; for it, we abandon parents, country, dignities, riches and the enjoyment of this world and all voluptuousness, that we may preserve it in our interior. Through purity of heart, we strive to keep and preserve our heart free from dangerous passions, that we may reach the perfection of charity, by tending to it by the different degrees of that virtue."[5] Nothing is plainer: Cassian teaches us not only the advantage, but the necessity of purity of heart and the reason he gives for it, is, that it subdues the passions and leads to perfect charity.

Frequent confession gives to the Christian who practices it, that purity of heart, because having but seldom any

[4] 2 Cor. vii. 4. [5] Coll. c. 5, 7.

deliberate sins to confess, he is advised to confess his temptations and imperfections, which he detests with sincerity; the sentiments of his heart are changed or corrected, if needs be, and the imperfect acts due to them are forgiven through the sacramental absolution. This purity of heart is also maintained by frequent confession.

(b) Purity of intention is another requisite for the perfection of our acts, since the morality of what we do depends not only on the act itself, whether good, bad or indifferent, but also on the end the actor has in view. Our lives are largely made up of occupations in themselves indifferent, and therefore, the greater part of our time spent on earth is forever lost, unless we make serious efforts to make our indifferent acts, virtuous and meritorious for Heaven. Here the advice of the Apostle of the Gentiles is applicable: "Whether you eat or drink, and whatsoever else you do, do all for the glory of God."[6]

A careful examination of our conscience will easily convince us that we lose much valuable time, because we perform many of our actions and even of our daily duties, without that purity of intention which would make them meritorious for heaven. Such negligence should be properly confessed, and thus frequent confession, with the graces attached to the sacrament, cannot fail to procure purity of intention as well as purity of heart.

(c) Frequent confession makes the true penitent more circumspect, with regard to the dangers that lurk about, and more careful to avoid the wiles of the enemy of our salvation, against whom the Prince of the Apostles warns us, saying: "Be sober and watch, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour."[7] Solicitude about our eternal welfare belongs to purity of heart, in that it seeks what God commands or counsels, and the pure of heart see God and seek God in all that they think, resolve or do; but vigilance in avoiding all dangers to our salvation and proper care in directing all our actions to God, can be directly ascribed to frequent confession, and that for three reasons: 1. Sorrow for sin, essential to good confession, arms the penitent with a strong

[6] 1 Cor. x. 31. [7] 1 Peter v. 8.

determination to flee from every sin and all the dangers of it, according to the words of the Apostle: "The sorrow which is according to God worketh penance, steadfast unto salvation."[8] After telling us that sorrow or sadness, which is not of God, causes death, the same Apostle gives seven fruits that follow from sorrow of having offended God: solicitude for or desire of reconciliation with our heavenly Father; the defence or apology, that is, esteem of the virtue opposed to the sin which has been committed; indignation against the particular sin and against one's self, the perpetrator; fear of all occasions and dangers of sin; desire of satisfying for sins committed; zeal and emulation to extirpate sin wherever found, and finally revenge or the inclination to give or seek reparation for the outrage against God.[9]

II. The graces attached to the sacrament make it possible and even easy to keep the good resolutions comprised in one's sorrow, for Penance was not only instituted as a remedy for past sins, but as a preventive against future sins. Therefore, the fruits of sorrow or contrition for sin, although in a way attached to all supernatural sorrow, would be made void because of the fragility or the weakness of our nature, so that if "Penance is, in a special manner, of its own nature, a praiseworthy deed, because it acts with a view of destroying the sin already committed,"[10] it would be sterile of any future beneficial effect, were it not for the grace inherent in the sacrament. It is the grace of the sacrament which by increasing the love for God in the soul, animates it to greater vigilance, enlightens the intellect as to the means to preserve ourselves from sin, bestows upon the will greater courage to overcome all dangers, and together with prayer and the frequent reception of the Holy Eucharist, enables us to persevere in the grace of God until death.

III. Penance as a sacrament has another advantage, if frequent, and that is that the priest, who sits as a judge in the sacred tribunal and is bound to absolve his penitent if he has the right disposition, is also a physician to prescribe proper and effective remedies for the cure of all spiritual ailments. Practically, in these United States, the confessor

[8] 2 Cor. vii. 10. [9] *Loc. cit.* [10] St. Thomas, p. 3, q.85 a. 2.

must act also as a spiritual director of his penitents and therefore, we refer to the duties of such penitents to the article on "Spiritual Direction."

Penitents who aspire to perfection will find in their confessors who are also their director, a sure guide, not only to avoid their former sins and imperfections, for which he will also prescribe proper remedies, but he will also show his penitent, who puts his whole trust in him, the means to obtain the purity of heart, which will enable him to persevere in the grace of God and to attain perfection. Those means vary according to circumstances and the disposition of the penitent, and as a physician cannot prescribe the proper medicine until he has diagnosed his patient's malady, neither can a priest, unless his penitent discloses the state of his conscience, which, ordinarily speaking, can only be done in the confessional. Unless we put our whose trust in our confessor, we cannot hope to obtain purity of heart and be cleansed from all iniquity, promised by St. John: "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all iniquity."[11]

IV. Contrition for sin must precede the confession of it. Contrition is a grief of the soul and a detestation of the sin committed, with the purpose of sinning no more.[12] By sin we understand a transgression against the law of God; it may be mortal or venial. According to the definition, contrition is composed of three parts: the sorrow for the sin committed, the detestation of it and the purpose or fixed resolve of sinning no more. Although sorrow and detestation can be distinguished in theory, the distinction is useless, because he that has the one, has the other; for sorrow is caused by the detestation of sin, and detestation is an act of the will, based on the knowledge of the great evil of sin, and apprehended by the intellect as the greatest of all evils. As to the purpose of sinning no more—although the purpose is not essential to contrition, which is complete with the detestation of sin—it is at least implicitly necessary to contrition and confession supposes it. Therefore when we make an act of contrition before entering the confessional, we should sincerely resolve nevermore to offend the

[11] John i. 9. [12] Co. of Trent, Sess. xiv. ch. 4.

Divine Majesty, but should we have the misfortune of forgetting it, it is probable that the absolution of the priest would be valid.

V. We now review the Catholic doctrine on contrition, in so far as it may be useful to those who desire the perfect purity of heart, so necessary to a holy life.

We will not dwell upon the quality which requires that contrition should be sincere and come from the heart and not merely from the lips; for we speak of true and not of false contrition. If there is question of mortal sins, true contrition ought to have these four qualities: (a) it must be universal, (b) supreme, (c) supernatural, and (d) efficacious; we will also see how far these four qualities are necessary, if the penitent has no mortal sins to confess.

(a) It is evident that contrition should extend to all unforgiven mortal sins, but it is well also that it should extend to all the sins of our life, mortal or venial, known or unknown, imitating in this the Prophet King who prayed: "From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord."[13] If the penitent has no mortal sins to confess, he should confess only the venial sins he deplores sincerely; but it would not be a sacrilege, if he confessed a multitude of venial sins and had a sincere sorrow for one only; for one venial sin can be forgiven without another. It is also advisable that the penitent, to insure a valid confession, confess with his venial sins he wishes to tell, some mortal sins of his past life previously told in confession. No other effort is necessary to obtain a universal sorrow of all mortal sins, than the simple consideration that one mortal sin, remaining unforgiven at the hour of death, would precipitate the impenitent sinner into everlasting fire.

(b) Contrition should be supreme or sovereign and by that we understand that we should be more grieved for the sins we have committed, than for any other evil that may befall us. It is certain that no one would be justified in committing a venial sin, and much less a mortal sin, if by doing so he could deliver all the souls from Purgatory, for it is not allowed to do evil that good may result from it; but there is no necessity of proposing to one's self any

[13] Ps. xviii. 13.

cases to test one's contrition and to ask one's self what he would do in such or such circumstance: there will be ample opportunity and sufficient time for a decision, when extraordinary cases arise. Should Satan propose any such case, one may well answer that he would do his duty.

Contrition is valid, if in general, one grieves more for mortal or venial sin than for any other evil. Besides, he, who is not conscious of having committed a mortal sin, and therefore has no other than venial sins or imperfections to confess, may safely follow the opinion of St. Thomas, who teaches that a virtual contrition, consisting in a desire to receive the graces of the sacrament of Penance, is sufficient, provided the penitent confess in a general way some venial sin or sins, as obstacles to a closer union with God. Scrupulous or timid souls who are always afraid that they have no valid contrition for their sins, should be advised to follow the Angelic Doctor's opinion. Such considerations like the eternity of the pains of hell, the eternal separation from God our Supreme Good, for which nothing can be substituted to satisfy the cravings of the heart for a lasting and unalloyed happiness, the last judgment with the curse of God on the wicked, and the life, passion and death of Our Lord to satisfy for mortal sin, etc., are very apt to inspire any penitent—unless he be a hardened sinner—with a supreme detestation of all mortal sin, which has brought so much misery into this world and will bring everlasting damnation upon the unrepenting sinner.

(c) Contrition for venial as well as for mortal sin, should be supernatural. When we speak of supernatural contrition, we do not mean that the initiative or beginning of it must be inspired by God, for all supernatural acts of man are necessarily begun, continued and completed through the grace of the Holy Ghost. "Without Me you can do nothing,"[14] that is nothing that tends to our eternal welfare, says Our Lord. But we mean here a contrition that springs from a motive made known to us by divine revelation; for a sorrow that is based on natural motives, such as sickness, disgrace, loss of position or of worldly goods, etc., would be a natural sorrow in common with unbelievers, Gentiles

[14] John xv. 5.

and savages who also deplore their deeds, because of the temporal evils resulting from them; but such sorrow cannot avail for a supernatural end, eternal life. The principal motives for a sufficient contrition for mortal sin, in the sacrament of Penance are: the loss of heaven or of God's friendship, the fire of hell and the heinousness of mortal sin, which offends the majesty of the Creator and Ruler of the universe, to whom we are indebted for all that we are and all that we have.

The grief and sorrow we should have for venial sin, must also be founded on a supernatural motive. Any of the following truths may serve as a motive for a sufficient contrition: venial sin offends God; it deprives the sinner of more abundant and special graces, and thus retards a closer union with his God; it prevents for a time our entrance into the joys of heaven; it decreases our merits; it tarnishes the beauty of our soul, and diminishes and weakens its supernatural life in the practice of all virtues, moral or divine; it subjects us to the fire of Purgatory after this life and possibly to temporal punishment during the present life; it leads to mortal sin and the supernatural death of the soul, etc.

VI. Perfect contrition. Contrition as we have seen, must be supernatural, and we have given three motives which make our sorrow sufficient for the forgiveness of mortal sin in the sacrament of Penance; but these motives we have examined, are principally based on fear and shame; fear of hell and of losing heaven, our eternal destiny, and shame or confusion for having offended the Creator of heaven and earth, to whose dominion all things are subject, and the sinner alone dares face his Benefactor and defy Him by saying in his heart: "I shall not serve Thee." This shame cannot well exist without fear, unless faith be lost, and thus the three motives belong to servile fear, which moves servants and slaves, who dread their master, to obey him: through fear alone they serve him and through fear they deplore their disobedience to his orders. This servile fear is clearly imperfect and should in a large measure be replaced by a fear more becoming to Christians, who call God their Father: for "He," who is redeemed through Jesus Christ, "is not a

servant but a son; and if a son, an heir also through Christ.... and because you are sons," says the Apostle, "God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying: Abba, Father."[15] This latter fear is called "chaste," because it is devoid of that base and servile fear, which moves man to place his worldly interests before all other considerations, and it is called "filial fear," because a dutiful son, who dearly loves his father, detests sin indeed, but not so much because of the punishment that awaits him, as because of the fear of offending one he loves so tenderly.

Contrition or grief for having offended God, if founded mainly on the love of our heavenly Father for His sake, or because He is, by nature or essence, all-good and therefore deserving of all our love, is called perfect contrition, because there can be no detestation for sin more perfect than the one God Himself has for it. No one but God comprehends fully the evil of sin, and therefore, no created being can conceive for it the horror it deserves. Why does God necessarily detest sin? Because sin is opposed to His divine nature and attributes. If God could regard with indifference any disobedience to His commandments, which constitutes a revolt against the Divine Majesty, He would cease to be God, for His majesty could be despised with impunity; His holiness by which He loves what is infinitely good, *i. e.*, His own essence, would be called in question; His beauty would be tarnished; His wisdom impugned; His providence assailed, His justice contemned and His very existence would thereby be denied.

To make our contrition perfect, God and His infinite perfections, as we understand them by the light of revelation, must be the principal motive of our detestation for sin. But what is God? He is infinitely perfect; He possesses all the desirable perfections which we can think of, and He possesses them in an unlimited degree. Therefore He is all-good, as He is infinitely perfect in all His attributes. He is infinitely amiable and lovable, and who can help loving such boundless beauty and goodness? Besides God not only merits all our love and condescends to be loved by us, but He demands and wills it, and therefore we should

[15] Gal. iv. 6. 7.

also love Him because such is His good pleasure, and because His desire is everything to the soul that truly loves Him. Let us examine ourselves to find out, if we have not until now loved our heavenly Father, only because of His bountiful gifts or of His promises of eternal happiness, instead of adverting to our duty and obligation of loving Him solely or at least mainly for His own sake.

When we are filled with the ardent love of God for His sake, we delight in thinking of His transcendent perfections, we dwell on them, we speak of them to others and we rejoice to hear them praised and glorified. What more natural than to pass from these lofty sentiments to the love of complacency, which we have mentioned already in the article on contemplation. The love of complacency is, as it were, an outburst of the divine fire, that burns in the soul of those who delight in God's infinite loveliness, and then the soul cries out in a transport of heavenly joy with the Virgin Mother: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior,[16] or with the Prophet King: "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God,"[17] or with St. Francis de Sales: "May my God be blessed forever for being so good! Whether I live or die, I am too happy to know that my God is rich in all kinds of possessions and His goodness is infinite." In this ecstasy of love, the soul delights in the ineffable beauty of her God, and rejoices that He possesses in His essence the plenitude of all good, and that He finds in Himself His own beatitude; she is supremely gratified through the knowledge that so many saints love Him in heaven and upon earth, that the Church everywhere resounds with His praises, that His Son honors Him as He deserves to be honored and this ecstatic delight is to her an anticipated paradise.[18]

We should not overlook the happy effect of the divine life, which produces perfect contrition for our sins, for no matter how guilty a sinner may be in the sight of God, if he is capable of such perfect charity and detests his sins because they offend a God so infinitely good and lovable, at the very moment his sins—as to the eternal punishment due to them—are forgiven, sanctifying grace is infused into

[16] Luke i. 46. [17] Ps. 83. 3. [18] Hamon, S. S.

the soul and with it all the virtues and gifts of the Holy Ghost; he is again restored to the friendship of God and to the inheritance of a child of God, and even all the temporal punishments due to sin may be remitted, if the sinner's love for God be ardent, and he be fully determined to sacrifice everything, yea his very life in order to conform all his thoughts, words and actions to the holy will of God. Such was the love of Mary Magdalen, of whom Our Lord said: "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much." [19] Such was also the love of the apostles, of thousands of martyrs and of numberless saints.

It need hardly be stated that notwithstanding the efficacy of a perfect contrition, the sinner is not dispensed from the obligation of declaring his mortal sins in his next confession. He should also employ all the means given him to persevere in his good resolutions made in his previous confession, and avoid at least all proximate occasions of sin.

Must the sinner, who has made an act of perfect love of God, the principal motive of a detestation of all his sins, consider it now unlawful to grieve for his sins, because mortal sin would have shut him out of heaven and deserved hell? Certainly not, for, if imperfect contrition together with the sacrament of Penance remits mortal sin, it must be acceptable to God, and although it is inferior to perfect contrition, nothing prevents any one from having them both; but we should principally grieve for our sins, because they offend a God infinitely good and amiable in Himself, and deserves the united love of all rational creatures in heaven and on earth.

VII. Without a firm purpose of amendment, contrition is not sincere, and that is true of venial as well as of mortal sin; for as Lactantius well remarks: "To do penance is nothing else than to make known and to affirm that one is determined not to sin any more." [20] Contrition, therefore, should be efficacious, and by this is meant, that the sinner to have a valid contrition for his grievous offenses, must make a firm resolve to avoid, in the future, the sins he so much detests, and also their near occasions. We do not mean to assert that a contrition without the explicit resolve to avoid

[19] Luke vii. 47. [20] Inst., c. 13

all mortal sins, would be an unvalid contrition, for the penitent may not think of it, and then the fixed resolve is implicity or virtually contained in his otherwise sincere sorrow for his sins; but if he thinks of it, as he should in order to make his contrition more efficacious, the lack of a fixed purpose never to fall again into mortal sin, would make his contrition worthless and his confession sacrilegious.

As for venial sin, the determination of the will, never more to commit them, needs to comprise only one particular venial sin, or a single species of sin, and it is even sufficient, if one determine to diminish the number of his venial sins. In practice penitents should strive to join to their contrition a firm and explicit resolution never again to commit the sins they have confessed, whether they be venial or mortal, for, as we have remarked before, penitents should abstain from mentioning venial sins for which they have no sincere sorrow, and for which they cannot form a firm determination never more to commit them.

Let us incidentally remark here that pious souls should mainly choose for their contrition and also for their confession, their besetting sin, or that kind of sin they are most commonly guilty of, and which springs from their dominant passion. That class of sins should be likewise the object of their most firm purpose of amendment, as well as of their most earnest efforts to overcome the corresponding passion; for, says Thomas à Kempis, "If we could perfectly extirpate one vice every year, we would soon be perfect men, but seldom do we perfectly overcome so much as one vice, nor are we earnestly bent upon our daily progress, and therefore we are cold and tepid."[21]

To the efficiency of contrition belongs also the obligation of shunning the near occasions of sin. He who has been guilty of one or more mortal sins, besides his fixed resolve never more to commit them, must likewise determine sincerely to avoid the near occasions of mortal sin; and by these near occasions we mean persons, places or things which of their nature usually awaken the passions and thus lead to sin; for otherwise, his contrition is neither true nor sincere. We are also taught that, on account of the peculiar

[21] B. I., c. 11.

temperament and inclinations of different people, some circumstances or occasions may be remote occasions for one person, but proximate for another, Each penitent should learn from experience whether circumstances which of themselves are remote occasions of sin, may not be for him near or proximate occasions.

As for venial sins there are so many occasions of them, that it is practically impossible to avoid them all. Nevertheless, if a sincere Christian knows from his experience of the past, that certain persons, certain places, certain conversations, certain books, were always the direct cause of his deliberate venial sins, does he not owe it to himself to shun whatever is a proximate occasion of sin for him, if he really desires to progress in virtue? In practice it may often be more advisable that those near occasions of deliberate venial sin, which are hardly avoidable, be made remote or less dangerous, either through prayer or some mortification, which a prudent confessor, if he be consulted, will suggest to his well-disposed penitent.

The firm purpose of amendment also implies, that we employ the proper means to enable us to avoid a relapse into sin. What would we think of a sick man who consults a physician, and thereafter is unwilling to take the medicine the latter has prescribed? Likewise the penitent who approaches the tribunal of Penance to regain the vigorous health of his soul, must take the remedies which his case demands. It matters not if the remedies for his spiritual ailment be taught him by his faith or by his past experience or by his confessor; if his conscience tells him that some remedies are indispensable to persevere in God's grace, he is in duty bound to adopt them forthwith before it is too late, and if the confessor points out some remedy as the only one that will save the penitent from an immediate relapse into mortal sin, the latter can hardly be excused from mortal sin, if he fail to adopt the advice given him.

Pious souls who tend to perfection, need hardly be reminded again that they should frequently consult their director in the confessional, not only concerning their deliberate venial sins, but about their many imperfections as well, and even about their frequent temptations; because for them,

the confessor is especially the physician of their souls, to whom they should disclose everything that may retard their spiritual advancement; and to hide anything from him, no matter how humiliating it may be, is often fatal, as it may lead to serious and irreparable evil. For that class of spiritual patients the following disposition and affections should govern their conduct with their confessor: humility, sincerity, confidence and prompt obedience.

VIII. Qualities of A Good Confession

There are many qualities which help to make a confession truly fruitful unto salvation, but the necessary qualities may be reduced to these three: humility, sincerity and integrity or entirety.

1. Our confession should be humble, because humility denotes the sinner's admission of his infirmities and miseries, as well as of his dependence on God for the remission of his sins. The sinner should feel like the prodigal son, who upon his return to his father's house, said: "Father I have sinned against heaven and before thee; I am not worthy to be called thy son,[22] or like the publican who dared not raise his eyes toward heaven and struck his breast saying: "Lord have mercy on me a sinner."[23]

The following considerations will help the penitent to confess with a truly humble heart: (a) Once he was a child of God, but by mortal sin he has become a vile slave of the devil; (b) he was destined to enjoy all the delights of heaven in company with the angels and saints, yea, in company with the infinitely amiable God, and he has preferred the company of the damned and of horried demons, whose torments by right and justice he should share, and among whom his place has been prepared; (c) the sinner has violated his most sacred promises, made in Baptism and renewed at his first Holy Communion and in his Confirmation. He is, in a sense, a traitor and a perjurer; (d) he is an ungrateful wretch, for Jesus Christ died for him and pursued him with His love and favors, and the sinner has

[22] Luke xv. 18. [23] Luke xviii. 10 *seq.*

turned the gifts of his intelligence and free will, as well as of the endowments of his nature against his Benefactor; (e) the sinner is a deicide for he contributed to the Savior's death and he is more guilty than they who crucified Him, for the Jews would not have crucified Him if they had known Him, says the Apostle Peter;[24] (f) the sinner is a rebel against the Divine Majesty, and he entered into a league with the demons to dethrone the Lord of Heaven and earth, by executing their wills; (g) the sinner should know—and his reason convinces him of it—that he stands condemned in the sight of the infinitely just God, and that only one thing lies between him and the awful judgment of an angry God, whom he has outraged, and that is Divine Mercy in the tribunal of reconciliation. What shall it be, condemnation or pardon? The despised publican was forgiven because of his humble prayer; the prodigal was received with joy because of the sincere admission of his guilt; the penitent thief was promised Paradise, because he asked the Redeemer to remember him in His kingdom. If a penitent confesses in all humility and sincerity all his sins, he is promised the same pardon, through the merits of Jesus Christ his Savior, who will not despise a contrite and humble heart.[25]

If the penitent has committed only one mortal sin in his life, the foregoing considerations are equally proper to excite in him a true humility; for, although his guilt may be forgiven, it should be deplored as long as he lives, for he was once a rebel, a traitor, a murderer and a slave of Satan and deserved to be placed among the damned. Is that not a sufficient reason to weep over his ingratitude towards his heavenly Father as long as he remains in this valley of tears? Remember Peter's denial and his life-long penance and tears. Even, if one has never sinned mortally, the conviction of being less worthy of his heavenly Father's love and affection through a wilful venial sin, and the consciousness of having deserved a lower and less honorable place among the saints, together with the thought of the ingratitude attached to venial sin, by which the best and most loving Father is offended and despised, are all and each one sufficient to keep the penitent forever humble.

[24] Acts ii. 23; iii. 17 *seq.* [25] Ps. Miserere, Hamon, S. S.

2. Confession should be sincere, that is, it should be truthful and conform to the facts disclosed to our mind by a careful examination of our conscience. It is a sacrilege to intentionally deceive or try to deceive the confessor in anything relating to the necessary matter of the sacrament, for it makes the confession null and void. Hence it is sacrilegious to increase or diminish the number of the mortal sins one has committed, although ignorant people may be excused from grievous sin, if they think there is no harm in a numerical exaggeration, because the smaller number is contained in the larger. It is a sacrilege knowingly to confess a sin as mortal, when it was committed without advertence or without full consent of the will; it is also a sacrilege to allege an untruthful circumstance which, if true, would change the sin from mortal to venial or from venial to mortal. In all such cases only ignorance can excuse the deceiver from the guilt of mortal sin and of a heinous sacrilege. It is still more grievous and utterly inexcusable to feign a true sorrow or a firm purpose of amendment in order thereby to induce the priest to give absolution. An untruth about one's age, family, country, nationality, condition, ability or occupation or other circumstances that do not materially aggravate or lessen one's guilt, would be only a venial sin. It is not contrary to truth, to have two or more confessors; one to whom mortal sins are confessed and another to whom only venial sins are confessed, because the latter is better known; such foolish conduct would be sinful only on account of the evil intention, that is, to commit sin with more freedom, or if the penitent first confesses to one priest his venial sins omitting his mortal sins, and thereafter goes to another priest to confess his mortal sins, it is evident, that in the latter case, both confessions would be sacrilegious.

3. The integrity of a confession follows from the penitent's sincerity in confessing all his sins as they appear to him, but as it is usual to distinguish between the sincerity of the penitent and the integrity of his confession, we follow the common practice.

Our confession must be entire, and by that is meant that nothing should be omitted in the manifestation of our

conscience or in telling our sins, which the Divine Law interpreted by the Church obliges the penitent to declare to the priest, the judge in the sacred tribunal of Penance.

The subject of integrity is so vast that we do not propose to say anything more on the subject than that the penitent is obliged in conscience to declare in his confession all his mortal sins with their number, distinguishing his sins by their different species and adding thereto such circumstances that materially aggravate or diminish their guilt.

There is, as we have said, no strict obligation to confess venial sins, for they can be forgiven by acts of contrition and by all those means that increase sanctifying grace in the soul, but, if the penitent cannot for a certainty say whether his sin is mortal or venial, it is evident that he should confess it as doubtful, for fear of making a sacrilegious confession. Although venial sins need not be confessed under pain of sin, penitents should nevertheless be advised to confess their venial sins as well as their mortal sins, and that for several reasons; first, because it is the best means to avoid them in the future, as the sacrament of Penance gives special graces and supernatural strength to shun the duly confessed sins; and secondly, because those penitents who do not confess their venial sins are precisely those who least of all think of expiating their sins by virtuous deeds. There is another reason that concerns especially pious souls who tend to perfection. If fear, shame or negligence prevents one from declaring all his venial sins, his progress in virtue can be but slow, if not stationary, yea, he even exposes himself to fall back on the road to perfection, and that generally ends in spiritual ruin. "How can a physician," says St. Augustine, "cure a wound which the sick man is not willing to reveal to him?" [26] There are temptations to be overcome, affections to be purified, devotions and mortifications to be undertaken in order to heal and strengthen the soul, and how can the physician of our souls prescribe the proper remedy, if he be ignorant of his penitent's spiritual malady and of the cause of his lukewarmness and tepidity? May we not generally ascribe the failure of greater and prompter progress among religious people to

[26] Serm. 66 de temp.

careless confessions, the result of a routine or of an indifference to their advancement toward perfection?

We should also note here that, whereas in our physical maladies a wound that is not mortal may have a connection with a dangerous sickness of which the patient is suffering, and since the wound may help the physician to diagnose the case, and since it often happens that the two must be cured together, likewise a venial sin may reveal to the confessor a dangerous condition of his penitent in a totally different species of sin. To cite a most common occurrence, a slight disobedience of a boy or girl to parents, if often repeated, my lead to the revelation of a dangerous friendship, which must be quickly and carefully eradicated; thus also neglect of the rules of a religious community, although not sinful in itself, may prove the beginning of a spirit of contempt for all authority, which is not only sinful, but most deplorable and exceedingly dangerous.

IX. General confession. When is a general confession obligatory, advisable or hurtful?

1. A general confession including all the mortal sins of one's life is not only advisable but obligatory, if a patient has in the past made one or more sacrilegious confessions and he finds it practically impossible to determine when he made the first bad confession or when his confessions became again good, and this is especially the case with sinners who have habitually led sinful lives, or remained in the near occasion of sin, or at least led very careless lives by following their wicked inclinations, without fear of God and of His just judgments. In such cases a sincere return to God and renunciation of one's ways without a general confession seems practically impossible: should such a penitent refuse to make one, it belongs to the confessor to determine whether or not absolution should be denied him.

2. A general confession is advisable whenever some considerable fruit may be expected from it, *e. g.*, when there is a probability that either through fear, ignorance, carelessness or a sinful life the penitent may have made a sacrilegious confession; but a general confession should especially be recommended to the sick during a long illness and especially when they are in their agony and have never

made one before; this can easilly be done in a general way with the help of the priest, who with a few questions will insure a relative but sufficient integrity of the penitent's confession and by a short exhortation dispose him to a perfect contrition for all his sins.

3. A general confession is also advisable for all those who enter upon a new life, like the married state or the military or religious life, as well as for them who are about to undertake a long and perilous journey. It may also be recommended to them who have great reason to doubt of their being in the state of grace, but in this particular case it should be allowed but once. Thereafter they may be permitted to confess the sins they have forgotten in the general confession.

The favor to make a general confession may even be granted once to scrupulous people, but they must be made to understand that their safety depends on their obedience to their confessor, who in the confessional occupies God's place as His delegate, and that they can make no mistake by following his advice or command; for should the confessor err in his judgment, the penitent by obeying pleases God and the confessor alone is to blame. If on the contrary the penitent disobeys the priest in the tribunal of Penance, he disobeys God and he deliberately condemns himself.

How inconsistent scrupulous persons are! They go to the physician of their souls to obtain the cure of their spiritual maladies and they refuse to follow his prescriptions that will insure the health of their soul. Others act still more insanely, if possible: if they are not allowed their own way and are not permitted to confess again and again the same sins, they seek a new confessor. Scruples are increased not so much by frequent and inopportune confessions, as by a frequent change of confessors; a priest is a physician of souls, as has been remarked before, and therefore patients suffering from a spiritual sickness, should always go to the same physician who is already acquainted with their spiritual ailments.

4. A general confession not of one's whole life, but limited to one or more years, is very useful to all and an annual confession of that nature should be recommended

to all those who desire to make rapid progress in virtue and who aim at perfection, no matter what their state of life may be. Penitents, should ordinarily not choose for such confessions the eve of great feasts, when many penitents are waiting for their turn to enter the confessional, and it is well also, that they should previously make arrangements with their confessor about the time most suitable for him. Catholics should bear in mind that in making a general confession they should take care, if they have committed a mortal sin since their last confession, to confess first the grievous sins committed since their last worthy confession, unless all their confessions were sacrilegious during the time specified in their general confession; for in the latter case it makes but litte difference how they begin.

ARTICLE X

Ninth Means of Perfection

Daily Examination of Conscience

1. In What the Daily Examination of Conscience Consists—II. Utility and Necessity of a Daily Examination of Conscience; (a) Considered as a Great Aid to Frequent Confession; (b) Considered in Itself—III. How to Make a Good Examination of Conscience.

I. In the last article we spoke on the confession in the tribunal of Penance, and in this there is question of a confession we make, not to a priest, the representative of God, but to God Himself within the secrecy of our soul, with no other witness than God and our conscience.

Although not a sacramental confession, it is nevertheless a true confession, as we shall see, for notwithstanding that it is called examination of conscience, it should have besides, confession or acknowledgment of our sins, contrition and the firm resolve to offend God no more. The absolution of the priest and the penance imposed by him are lacking; but the sincere penitent should impose on himself a penance proportionate to his guilt, and as to the remission of his sins, he must directly expect it from God, who will not refuse it to a well-disposed sinner. In this confession or examination of conscience, a different disposition is required, for only a perfect contrition will insure the remission of mortal sin, whilst an imperfect contrition is sufficient in the sacramental confession; and moreover, although a sinner may by a perfect contrition have obtained the remission of his mortal sins, he must nevertheless confess them, in his next sacramental confession, to a duly authorized priest for the purpose of obtaining his absolution. Venial sins need not be confessed in the sacrament of Penance, but they who strive for perfection cannot hope to make any progress, unless their daily venial sins, which they detect in their ex-

amination of conscience, be also submitted to the power of the keys in the sacrament of Penance.

II. When we consider the utility of a daily examination of conscience, we may look at it as a preparation for frequent confession, to which it leads and which it promotes, or we may examine it in itself as indispensable to progress in virtue and sanctity.

As a remote preparation for a sacramental confession, the daily examination is not absolutely necessary, but it is highly commendable, for it makes the penitent more guarded and diligent in finding out, not only the mortal sins he is bound to reveal to his confessor, but also all sins he should confess with due regard to his spiritual advancement; for thus he will be able to determine by himself which are the sins that he truly and sincerely detests, and these alone should be confessed. He will likewise be able to determine what means he should employ to avoid all dangerous occasions of sin, to overcome the temptations of the evil one and to vanquish the evil inclinations of his nature, and if he detect that the means formerly employed gave no satisfactory results, he may then decide to lay the case before his confessor, who will most likely discover the reason of his unsuccessful efforts.

The daily examination of conscience is, as it were, a daily exercise of frequent confession, for the practice of confessing before God alone, gives to the penitent's sacramental confession a perfection which cannot be obtained otherwise: the former will make the latter discreet, for the penitent will distinguish between deliberate sins and unavoidable imperfections; sacramental confession will be accompanied with the proper intention to please God; it will be firm, because the penitent will not swerve from the truth through false shame; it will be modest, for modesty springs from the interior admission of one's guilt; it will therefore be humble, sincere, frank and clear; it will be simple without mixture of useless circumstances; it will be entire, respectful and cautious, that is, it will incriminate no one but the penitent, and finally it will be timely and frequent. All these qualities of a good confession, enumerated by St. Thomas, will be the natural fruit of a daily and careful ex-

amination of conscience, considered as a remote preparation for the sacramental confession, and but little time need be spent in the examination of conscience, before the next reception of the sacrament of Penance.

2. We will now consider daily examination of conscience in itself and as a means of perfection.

We find in the daily examination a great remedy against the corruption of our nature, that nature so inclined to evil, a nature so perverse that, unless we be constantly on the alert, it will drive our whole being into the mire of sin and vice, and into the most shameful excesses.

God's law is our guide and our conscience enlightened from on high, proclaims it holy, just and good. It was given us, that by following its precepts, we might be good and just, and lead holy lives. Although the most noble part of our soul, created to the image and likeness of its Creator, rejoices in and is delighted with the law, how is it that we do what we hate and fail to do the good which we will? The reason is obvious: we, like St. Paul, see another law in our members, fighting against the law of our mind, and unless we strenuously resist the former, we become captives and slaves of the law of sin. Unhappy men that we are, who shall deliver us from the body that drags us down even to the death of the soul? [1]

The body is indeed the worst enemy of our spiritual progress and therefore we must continually watch its rebellious inclinations and be ready to combat them; but it is not alone to conspire against us, it has allies in those with whom we live and with whom we have any intercourse: in our friends and relatives, in almost all people we meet, as well as in all the practices and maxims of the world around us, and therefore it is hard to overcome them all. Unhappy men that we are, who shall deliver us from so many enemies and false friends?

May the soul itself be trusted? Its innate pride and presumption, its self-love, its chafing and fretting under restraint, imposed by natural and divine law—to which conscience bears witness—war against its reason and therefore all its movements have carefully to be guarded and

[1] *Cfr.* Rom. vii. 7 *seq.*

particularly so, when its passions are aroused, or when the evil inclinations of the flesh demand to be gratified and satiated; for the intellect is thereby obscured and the will is, alas, so weakened that often we do what we will not.[2]

Is man's memory at least neutral? Does it store away and keep safe, until called for by the will, all good and evil thoughts, pictures and images? This might be so, if it were not for the imagination, the slave or at least the faithful servant of the soul's affections. The imagination with its ramblings and vagaries, influenced thereto by the suggestions of the evil one, readily allies itself with our vicious intellectual and sensual appetites, and, as it were, feeds them with the evil representations stored in man's memory to further cloud the intellect and vitiate the will.

Add to all these dangers the ruses of Satan, who is always on the alert and never sleeps, but, like a wild beast which constantly lies in wait to devour its prey, he watches every opportunity to represent evil as good, attractive and desirable, or to excite, directly or indirectly through the imagination, the evil desires of the flesh and to rouse the passions of the soul.

This is the sad picture of man since the fall of our first parents, and against all the enemies of our salvation, we have only one remedy, "The grace of God by Jesus Christ, Our Lord;" [3] but to obtain it, we must co-operate with it to the full extent of our strength; "Watch and pray," should be our motto. Our co-operation should be constant and never cease, for the struggle with all the enemies of our salvation must continue until death. Is there then no hope of subduing at least some of our enemies and of obtaining therefrom at least some relief? The only relief we can have is that of the victor who sees his enemies at his feet, keeps them down and watches them with vigilance, for fear they might unexpectedly rise and hurt him. We carry with our being in our innate pride the germs of rebellion against our conscience and our God, until our last breath. The world will forever persist in winning us to its side, by the example of its partisans as well as by its pernicious errors and seductive maxims, and our sensual appetites with the

[2] Rom. *loc. cit.* [3] Rom. vii. 25.

help of our inordinate passions will forever strive to pull down the noblest part of our soul, intellect and will, to their level and to the gratification of their desires; and as for Satan, his hatred of God and his envy of the happiness in store for man, makes him our sworn enemy and he will forever remain, according to St. Peter, our adversary "Who like a roaring lion goeth about, seeking whom he may devour." "So long," says St. Bernard, "as your soul is united to your mortal body, you deceive yourselves if you believe that your vices are annihilated, when in reality they are only asleep. [4]

If the passions of the soul and the evil desires of our sensual nature cannot be permanently subdued, and after many glorious victories won by constant effort, are only dormant, and if our exterior enemies, the world and the devil, never relent, but are always on the alert, to ensnare us, should we not watch them all with a vigilant eye? Can we remain in peace and security one day?

Our heart, the seat of our affections, may be compared to a field; according to what we sow, we shall reap. But the husbandman is not satisfied with sowing good wheat in his field: he will carefully eradicate from it weeds, thistles and briars, for he knows he cannot obtain pure wheat, when noxious weeds are allowed to grow up together with the good seed; he is also well aware that whatever food weeds take from the soil, it is to the detriment of the prospective crop. "Likewise," says St. Bernard, "virtue cannot grow at the same time with vice. To make the former grow vigorously, the latter must be kept down. Take away all superfluities so that what is necessary may develop. All that you wrest away from the passions turns to the profit of virtue." [5]

Now, all the enemies and the dangers to our spiritual welfare, which we have partly enumerated and explained, are common to every individual of the human race, except the Blessed Virgin, who by a special privilege was preserved from the blight of original sin, and those that by a miracle of God's bounty have been confirmed in grace. Still, although the germ of every sin is in each one of us, the pro-

[4] In Cant., Serm. 52. [5] In Cant., Serm. 48.

portion is different: pride and selfishness may be the besetting sin of one and in another it may be cupidity with injustice or with one or more other daughters of the vice in its train; one person may find that good cheer and voluptuousness is his dominant passion and it may be incompatibility of temper and aversion to neighbor in others. Therefore each one must examine himself, and as we change constantly according to circumstances and outside influences, the examination should be frequent, so that new remedies may be provided for new dangers.[6]

3. We should not overlook the great advantage that the examination of conscience has over frequent confession, in that it can be done with greater facility and as often as we choose and wherever we choose; but how often the examination should take place is not so easily determined, as it depends greatly on circumstances, on the occupation of each person and on the particular duties of one's state of life. It could hardly be expected that people living in busy surroundings should have recourse to the salutary practice before evening, when their work is terminated; but it is now the general custom that religious, living in communities, should examine their conscience twice, once in the evening on all the sins and imperfections of the day, and again before noon on their besetting sin or on a specific defect, recommended for their particular examination by their director. It seems that the holy Doctors of the Church and nearly all the saints of the early Church advise very strongly both morning and evening examination, and the masters of spiritual life imposed them both upon their disciples. We have already quoted St. Ephrem,[7] and we give now the opinion of St. Dorothy:[8] "The ancients, our fathers of spiritual life, have very well taught us how we must every day blot out our faults and how we should expiate them by penance: let every one examine himself with attention in the evening and reflect on the conduct he has observed during the day. In the morning let him again examine himself how he passed the night and let him do penance and be reconciled to God."[9]

[6] *Cfr.* Temptations in appendix. [7] Died about 379. [8] Died 560.
[9] Doct. II *de vita recta.*

St. Ignatius was not satisfied with a twofold examination, but after each hour he passed in review all his thoughts, words and actions of the previous hour, and thereupon expiated by penance the least fault he had detected in his examination and made a fixed resolve not to fall again into the same fault.[10] St. Francis Borgia is said to have followed the same practice. St. Dorothy, already quoted, gives us the reason for the salutary practice: "As we fail often," he says, "and as we forget our faults, it is our duty to examine, every hour and with care, how we conduct ourselves at the present moment with a view of finding out the sins we have committed."[11]

The early Fathers of the Church, the masters of spiritual life and the saints have not been the only ones to teach and practice the daily examination of conscience: it was even known among the Pagan philosophers; the Greeks proclaimed that "to know one's self" is the first knowledge required, not only for a virtuous life, but also as a first step towards wisdom. Forsooth, to know one's self, one must study himself, his actions, his inclinations, the movements of his heart, etc. The Pagan philosophers under the sway of Rome were more explicit: we have Cicero's authority that the daily examination was practiced among the Pythagoreans, and we may naturally conclude that it was prescribed for his pupils by the eccentric philosopher Pythagoras.[12] Be this as it may, Cicero writes of himself: "Following in this the custom of the Pythagoreans, I remember in the evening, by exercising my memory, all that I have said, heard, or done during the day,"[13] and Seneca, according to his own testimony, did likewise: "When the sun has gone down," he writes, "I scrutinize in myself the whole day; I weigh all my actions and all my words. I hide nothing from myself; I let nothing pass. Why should I fear to admit my errors to myself, as I can say to myself: See here, do that no more; I forgive you now."[14]

4. Christians look upon a daily scrutiny of their actions, not like the Pagans to avoid solely their daily shortcomings, but resort to it also as a means of perfection. There is still

[10] P. Nolarci in *vita sancti*, c. 24. [11] *Loc. cit.*
[12] Born about 600 B. C. [13] *De Senect.* [14] *De Ira.*

another inducement for Catholics to have frequent recourse to the examination of conscience. It is based upon the Apostle's assurance that it will result in freeing ourselves from the terrible judgment of God: "If we would judge ourselves," he says, "we would not be judged."[15] St. Paul here refers mainly to the scrutiny of our conscience as a preparation for Holy Communion, but he lays down a general rule, a warning for all Christians to examine their doings frequently, if they wish to escape the much to be dreaded judgment at our death and the general judgment on the Last Day. The sense of the citation is: If we judge our actions frequently, and if, after a careful and minute scrutiny of our conscience, we sincerely deplore the faults and imperfections discovered in the examination, and if, besides, we resolve not to commit them any more, and are ready to expiate them by adequate penances and frequent confessions, our lives will become so perfect that we need not fear God's judgment. The explanation agrees with the saying of St. Augustine and of others, that God loves to spare those who are their own accusers and to leave unjudged those who judge themselves.

III. Manner of making a good examination of conscience.

The examination being of so much importance that to perform it well is a sign of the elect, and that the neglect of it is considered by some saints as a sign of the reprobate,[16] we shall now see in what manner it should be made.

1. When we are about to make an examination of our conscience, we should forthwith place ourselves in the presence of God, and as our examination is usually a part of our evening prayer, we are supposed to have given thanks to God for all the favors received during the day; if not, we should not neglect it, for all God's graces, be they little or great, merit our gratitude and our thanks.[17] The first thing to do is to ask of God the light to know our sins and the imperfections we have committed since our last examination. This is considered necessary. "For," says St. Gregory,

[15] 1 Cor. xi. 31. [16] St. Gregory, Mor. 11. vi.

[17] St. Bernard, Serm. 51 in cant.

"we commit many sins which appear to us of little consequence, because we love ourselves with a self-love that shuts our eyes and flatters us whilst deceiving us." [18] It is then of the utmost importance that by the light from heaven we may dissipate the darkness which prevents the intellect from seeing our sins and from understanding the depth of their malice, the more so, because, as the same saint well remarks: "The soul receives only the grace of compunction, when it is conscious of the grievousness of its faults." [19]

2. After the preparation as set forth above, we must diligently search our conscience to find out our sins and negligences of the day and scrutinize it with the intellect as our severe accuser, and with our reason as the inflexible judge of all our thoughts, words and actions. "In this tribunal our conscience is the witness, fear is the executioner, and the love of God must efface and destroy iniquity with the sword of sorrow," according to St. Augustine. [20] "When you go to repose," says St. Chrysostom, "and no one prevents you, take before falling asleep, the book of your conscience, remember all your faults and see if you have not sinned by word, act or thought. [21] This examination should not be done negligently, but with a calm severity, nor should little faults be overlooked, for says the same saint in another place: "Before you go to sleep, make that examination. Do not despise little faults, but demand a rigorous account of them. By that means you will avoid more easily the greater sins." [22] Those that have already made progress in virtue and aspire to perfection, should especially weigh the meaning of the words "not to despise little faults," for, says St. Isidore, "faults that are light in beginners, become grievous in those that are perfect; the higher one is elevated, the lower is the fall; the gravity of the evil augments in proportion to the dignity of the person; one often condemns in the great what he condones in the lowly." Above all let everyone bear in mind that our judgment will be reviewed by an all-just and all-holy God at the moment of our death, with Satan our archenemy as our

[18] Hom. 4. in Ezech. [19] L. 5 in I Reg. c. 11.
[20] Hom. quadr. ex., 50, Hom., c. 6. [21] In Psalm 50, Hom. 2.
[22] Hom. 43 in Matt.

accuser. In order to escape from the shame and confusion of that supreme tribunal, at the end of the world, at which all those who ever lived upon earth shall assist, we should avoid generalities, eschew indulgence for our least sinful or imperfect acts and lay aside all excuses, but notwithstanding we should shun anxiety and preserve our peace of mind.

3. After the examination comes the sorrow for the sins we have discovered. "O my soul," exclaims St. Chrysostom, "we have passed the day. What good have we done? If thou hast done any good, give thanks to God for it, for all good is a gift of the Lord; if thou hast done evil, do it no more, remember thy sins; weep over them on thy couch and thus thou wilt blot them out." [23]

Let us bear in mind that our sorrow should be sincere and be felt in the heart, and that it should not only be supernatural but perfect: it should spring from the conviction that sin is the greatest of all evils, an offense against the Divine Majesty, an ingratitude against the best of fathers, a shameful contempt of the will of an all-holy, all-bountiful God. Let us note here that we call the attribute of God that inclines Him to will our good, His infinite bounty, and we call it justice when He gives to each one his due according to his merits, and mercy when He forgives the penitent sinner; but the mercy of God is extolled by the inspired writers of the Holy Scriptures over all the works of His hands, as if He only resorted to justice when His infinite wisdom demands it. God is just and holy and therefore demands the wilful submission of all rational creatures, but He requires only a minimum of service for a quasi-infinite reward, a few years of submission to His holy will for an eternity of glory and for such superabundant delights, that St. Paul after Isaias could write: "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." [24]

How shall we prove the sincerity of our grief? By chastising in ourselves the evil we deplore, not only as a punishment for the faults committed, but also as a preservative from future relapses. Therefore, the saints have always imposed upon themselves a penance proportionate to

[23] In Psalm 50, Hom. 2. [24] 1 Cor. ii. 9.

the guilt of their offenses, but never condoned the smallest fault nor even a wilful imperfection, without a salutary penance gladly undertaken to expiate it. It is well that the penance should be, if possible, of the same nature as the offense, such as to keep silence for immoderate talking; to perform a humiliating work for a fault of pride; to abstain from a savory dish for eating slightly more than necessary or before the time, or for disdaining a food which is not to one's taste; to refrain during two or three hours from noticing any object more than ten feet away for a dangerous or too free a look, etc. Penances like strict fasts, cilices, hair-shirts, etc., should never be undertaken without the consent of the spiritual director and that permission should not be presumed. Rash determinations which have usually their source in pride, deserve from God rather punishment than approval.

4. Without the resolve not to commit again the same and other offenses against our good God, the daily examination would bear no fruit. Fear, based on our weakness and on our experience of the past, should prompt our good resolution; but it is of the utmost importance, that the determination we take for our amendment should be efficacious, and by that is understood that we must choose some special means by which future falls can be avoided. If the examination has revealed to us the cause of our sins or imperfections, attack the cause and you eliminate the effect, Many relapses are due to illicit affections or inclinations of the heart; others are due to our surroundings or to friendships we have contracted, as so many occasions of sin. Evil inclinations or passions of the heart must be overcome either by the practice of the contrary virtues, or by mortifications and by prayer or by special devotions; all occasions of sin must be removed, if possible, or made remote by the means which each particular case with the light from on high will suggest. Again too many resolutions should be avoided, for if we divide our strength, the enemy, that is, all the inclinations of our corrupt nature, will triumph. It is therefore more advisable that we attack one or two most dangerous passions, whilst we try to defend ourselves against all of them. We should strive to subdue the most dangerous

enemy first, and then, turn our energies against a second, until we have overcome them all.

Particular Examen.

We have just seen that it is not advisable to make many different resolutions, because we should try to overcome one enemy at a time, and the same reason holds good why we should, besides our general examination at night, have a particular examination. This particular examination, which in religious communities usually takes place before the noon-day meal, but can be done at any convenient time, aims at a particular sin, a vice, an evil inclination, an obligation, a virtue or a special exercise of devotion; but we should principally have in view our dominant passion and the sin originating from it, called besetting sin. All the masters of spiritual life are again united in advising us to proceed with order in reforming our conduct by exterminating our vices: "We must wage war," says Cassian, "against our vices in a manner that each individual person, after having discovered his dominant vice, direct against it his principal attack." [25] He then goes on to say that our prayers, devotions and all our mortifications, must have for object the extermination of that vice. Reason dictates that course also, for we should first of all defend our souls in its weakest and most vulnerable part, and that practice allows us to concentrate all our energy on one point to insure full victory. When the most dangerous enemy has been overcome, the victory over the other vices, by taking them one by one, becomes gradually easier. St. John Chrysostom advises us to employ not a day, nor a week, but a whole month, if necessary, to vanquish one vice at a time. "Let us examine our vices," he says, "let us correct them gradually, one during one month and another in the following, and by this means let us render ourselves more perfect. Thus by ascending as by degrees the ladder of Jacob we reach heaven." [26] The Holy Doctor here seems to condemn the practice of many beginners, who allow but a short time, one or two days, at most a week, to eradicate their dominant vice. This is often the reason why so little progress is made in virtue.

[25] Collat. 5, c. 14. [26] Hom. 82 in Joan.

The particular examination was not entirely unknown even to the Pagan philosophers, for Plutarch adopted, in his time, nearly the same practices to overcome his vices one by one, which the saints and the masters of spiritual life have taught us: he even was wont to impose upon himself a penance for the faults he had committed.[27]

In order to succeed in overcoming our vices, we should, we said, choose for correction our dominant passion or vice, the source of our most common sins and temptations, but we may also take for a particular examination the virtue opposed to the vice: thus to uncharitableness is opposed the love of neighbor; to pride, humility; to sadness, patience, to anger, meekness, etc.; but each one should choose for the particular scrunity of his conscience the vice to which he is most addicted or determine upon the practice of the contrary virtue, and having made his choice, he should examine himself as to the sinful acts, words or thoughts contrary to that specific virtue. He should keep this up for a month or as long as he is not thoroughly satisfied that he has overcome his bad habits or dominant vice.

St. Ignatius teaches us that the daily particular examination includes three periods of the day and two examinations.

The first period of time begins immediately upon our rising, when we must resolve to guard ourselves carefully against the particular sin or defect, which we desire to correct or avoid.

Before the second period which is the middle of the day, we should have at hand a note-book, on a page of which we have drawn seven double lines, representing the seven days of the week; the double line on the top being the longest and the others gradually shorter until the double line at the bottom is only about one-half of the length of the double line on the top. At a convenient time, say a half hour before the midday meal, we should beg of God the grace we need, namely, to remember how often we have fallen into the particular sin or defect we have determined to avoid, and beg His help for a sincere amendment in the future. Then the first examination is to begin by demanding an account of our soul concerning the particular fault

[27] Plutarch, *de Cohib Ira.*

in question, which we desire to correct or amend, reviewing the time elapsed, hour by hour or period by period, from the hour at which we rose until the present moment, and we should mark on the first line of our prepared note-book as many points or small perpendicular lines as there are times we have fallen into the particular sin or defect, and thereafter we should resolve anew to amend ourselves during the interval between this and the second examination in the evening.

The third period of time is after supper, when the second examination will be made in like manner, and it should extend over the time that has elapsed since the first examination. After diligent scrunity of our thoughts, words and actions relating to our dominant vice, we should mark on the second line of our note-book as many points or short perpendicular lines as there are times we have fallen into the particular defect since our previous examen.

Let us observe here that the first and longest double line represents the success of the first day's battle against the principal obstacle to our spiritual advancement, and that the double lines gradually become shorter, for it is to be supposed that, day by day, our examen will reveal that our faults have grown less in proportion as the enemy is weakened by repeated defeats. To be certain that this is the case, we should compare, in the evening of the first day, our faults disclosed by the second examination with those of the first; on the next day we should compare the result of the second day with that of the first, and so on. We should continue this comparison throughout, adding, after the second week, the comparisons by weeks to those of days.

As it may not be convenient to have the note-book always in hand, St. Ignatius suggests that he, who is waging a relentless war against a particular vice, may, in order not to attract attention, lay his hand on his breast each time he has been guilty of the particular defect, but he should thereafter as soon as practicable, score the number of his faults in his note-book.

St. Ignatius does not speak of the penance we should impose upon ourselves after the discovery of a notable failing, but it is implicity inculcated in the purpose of amend-

ment, and in the act of contrition, mentioned by the saint in the general examination.

We have already remarked that our particular examen may have for object a specific virtue or even a pious practice, such as the practice of conformity to the will of God, or the practice of God's presence, of ejaculatory prayers, etc., and in it the same method delineated above and proposed by St. Ignatius may be followed. As we have already explained the exercise of the presence of God, we will take it for an example. In this we may follow two different methods: we may examine ourselves on the forgetfulness of the divine presence, and then we adopt the identical rules given by St. Ignatius, or we may examine ourselves on the many times we have been mindful of it during the first half of the day, and how often in the second half, notwithstanding our many occupations; *e. g.,* how many times did we rejoice in God's presence? How many times did we renew our intention to please Him by what we were doing? How many times did we lovingly address Him in humble but ardent ejaculatory prayers? In this practice we may also score in our note-books after each examination the times we have been faithful to the practice; but in this case we must begin at the bottom of the ladder or scale, for it is to be supposed that our fervor and devotion will gradually increase, and that towards the end of the week, we will have to jot down, in our note-book, every day, an ever increasing number of pious acts inspired by the presence of God.

ARTICLE XI

Tenth Means of Perfection

The Holy Eucharist

Efficacy of Daily Communion as a Means of Perfection—Effects of Holy Communion; It Unites Us Most Intimately to Jesus Christ; (a) It Conserves the Spiritual Life of the Soul; (b) It Destroys the Force of the Passions; (c) It Overcomes the Devil; (d) In Increases the Strength of the Soul; (e) It Fills the Soul with Heavenly Joy—Dispositions Required to Receive Holy Communion with Fruit—Acts Which Should Accompany the Reception of this Sacrament—Daily Communion the Rule and Not the Exception—Decree of Our Holy Father Pius X.—Spiritual Communion.

In this short treatise on Holy Communion, we consider it only in so far as it may contribute to the perfection of our soul.

I. Holy Communion is the principal means by which the divine fire of charity is enkindled in us. All the sacraments were, it is true, instituted to enable Christians to live the life of grace in this world and to secure their eternal destiny in the next, in union with their God; but some sacraments contribute more directly than others to that blessed life. Baptism and Penance give grace, if we have it not, and all other sacraments tend to increase it, but none so directly and efficaciously as the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, for the effect of Holy Communion, as we shall presently explain, is to unite us so intimately to Christ our Savior, the Source of all grace, that we participate thereby in His divine life. Therefore St. Thomas [1] teaches us that the Holy Eucharist is the perfection of all the sacraments, in that all the sacraments were instituted as means to an end; for all the sacraments have for ultimate end the sacrament

[1] P. 3, q. 75 a. 1.

of the body and blood of the Redeemer, truly present under the appearance of bread and wine in the Holy Eucharist.[2] A little further the Angelic Doctor tells us, that in Baptism we receive the first act of the life of grace, but Holy Communion is the complement thereof.[3] Hence although all the sacraments give grace to a worthy recipient, they are only a preparation for that perfect union with Christ in which the perfection of Christian life consists and which is vouchsafed only in Holy Communion. See here the holy Doctor's own words: "Baptism is the beginning of a spiritual life and the door to the other sacraments, but the Eucharist is the consummation of the spiritual life and the end of all the sacraments. Forsooth, holiness, which the other sacraments produce in the soul, is but the preparation for the reception and consecration of the Eucharist. Thus the reception of Baptism is necessary to spiritual life, but that of the Eucharist is necessary to its consummation,[4] that is, to its final complement and perfection."

Our perfection consists in the close and intimate union with God, for there cannot be in creatures a greater perfection that their perfect resemblance to their Creator or such close resemblance as their nature permits. The resemblance is the more perfect, the more faithful is our will in conforming itself to the will of God, and this is charity or the love of God of which St. John writes: "If any one love Me, he will keep My word and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him."[5] What friendly union, what intimate intercourse, this indwelling of the Father and the Son in our souls enfolds! The same doctrine is expressed by St. Paul as follows: "For the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost Who is given to us."[6] Now, if through charity the Father, Son and Holy Ghost dwell within our soul, what shall we say of the working of the Blessed Trinity in our hearts and souls when we receive Holy Communion?

Let us first state our simple belief in the Real Presence of Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist, for we firmly believe that

[2] P. 3, q. 63 a. 6; q. 73 a. 1. [3] Q. 79 a.1.
[4] *Loc. cit.*, 73 a.3. [5] John xiv. 23 [6] Rom. v. 5.

in Holy Communion we receive the body and blood, soul and divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ. As we receive Him not only as Man but also as God, we likewise receive the Father and Holy Ghost, for the Blessed Trinity is indivisible. We must also remember that one has to be already in the state of grace or abide in charity worthily to receive the Holy Eucharist, and consequently the Holy Ghost dwells already in the soul of them who receive the Body and Blood of Our Lord with the proper disposition. Still we learn from Our Lord Himself that: "He who eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me and I in him." [7] What other meaning can this second abiding have, than an increase of supernatural life in the soul, which enables the recipient of the sacrament to practice in the highest degree all Christian virtues and to withstand all the enemies of his spiritual progress? If there is anything taught us in the sixth chapter of St. John, besides the Real Presence, it is that the Holy Eucharist gives life to the soul and this life is none other that a participation of the divine life, the life that is in God and is identical with His infinitely perfect existence. "As the living Father hath sent Me and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same shall also live by Me;" [8] but that supernatural life leads to everlasting happiness and therefore: "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life," which the perfect alone can obtain.[9]

Let us now see how the Fathers of the Church understood the ineffable union that takes place between the soul and our blessed Lord in Holy Communion. One of the effects of the Holy Eucharist is that it transforms the worthy recipient into a new being, makes him entirely supernatural and thus he loses in a manner the natural inclinations of his soul to follow the divine impulse of grace. St. Augustine attributes the following language to Our Lord: "I am the nourishment of great souls: grow and you shall eat Me; it is not you who will change Me into your substance, as food into your flesh, but you will be changed into Me." [10] St. Denis the Areopagite explains the same effects by comparing Holy Communion to the action of an earthly fire: "As fire," he says, "reduces all things, with which

[7] John vi. 5. [8] *Loc. cit.*, 58. [9] *Loc. cit.*, 55-59. [10] Conf. L. 7, c. 10.

it comes in contact, to its own state, and communicates itself to all that comes near it; in like manner the Lord our God, who is an ardent fire, makes us to become, through that sweet nourishment, the perfect images of Himself by transforming us into Him." [11]

We should not imagine that the effects of the sacred union between God and the recipient of the august sacrament of the Altar, is entirely confined to the soul, for our whole being shares in it. Our bodies become in Holy Communion closely united to the adorable body of Our Lord and according to the sentiment of St. Chrysostom, the body of Our Lord and our own become as it were one: "Jesus Christ," he says, "has intermingled Himself with us. He has confounded His body with ours that we may become one with Him, like a body with its head; for that is proper to them who love ardently." [12]

The same doctrine is laid down by St. Cyril of Alexandria, but in a manner, if possible, more striking to express the perfect union of our body with the Incarnate Word, for he teaches that it is not only through charity that we are united to Jesus, our Savior, but even the flesh and blood of Christ and our flesh and blood are physically mixed so as to form but one whole, in the same manner as two pieces of wax melted together form only one mass. These are his words: "It should be observed that Jesus Christ is not only united to us by a relation which charity enfolds, but also by a physical participation. For if you mix together two portions of melted wax, they will form but one mass: in the same manner we are in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ is in us through the Communion of His body and of His blood." [13] Here we exclaim with the saints: "O Sacrament divine! O prodigy of love! O ineffable union of the Creator with His rational creatures! O sacred bond of charity! O pledge of eternal life!

II. It behooves us now to examine more in detail the salutary effects of Holy Communion in our souls; for, the soul participates more directly in the sacred union of our body and soul with the divinity and sacred humanity of the Incarnate God. St. Thomas finds the effect of Holy Com-

[11] De Coel. Hier. [12] Hom. 61 ad pop. Antioch. [13] L. 10 in Joan c. 13.

munion in our souls, by comparing the heavenly meat to the physical nourishment of our body, which sustains, augments, repairs and delights. "In the third place," says the Angelic Doctor, "we should consider the effects of the Eucharist with regard to the manner in which the sacrament is conferred, as it is given in the form of food and drink: thus all the effects which material food and drink produce for the corporal life, that is to sustain, to cause growth, to repair loss, to delight, this sacrament produces them also for the spiritual life." [14] Hence we distinguish four principal effects of the Eucharist: it sustains the spiritual life of the soul; it fortifies the soul by increasing its supernatural life; it also repairs the soul's losses; it delights. These effects were clearly taught by Our Lord, when He said: "My flesh is food indeed and My blood is drink indeed." [15]

1. The Holy Eucharist sustains the supernatural life of our immortal souls, for our Savior intended that this sacrament should be received as the spiritual food of souls, whereby those who live by the life of Him, Who said: "He that eateth Me, the same shall also live by Me," [16] may be fed and refreshed, and (it was also intended) "as an antidote whereby we might be freed from daily faults and be preserved from mortal sin." [17] The doctrine laid down by the holy Synod needs no explanation; it is clear and precise: since we must eat frequently to sustain the life of the body, likewise spiritual food, frequently partaken of, is necessary to the soul. The body needs strength to ward off all diseases, for, if it be once weakened, it is subject to organic disorders and all sorts of ailments. An emaciated body becomes easily the prey of epidemic plagues and contagious diseases, of lung and heart troubles and of many other afflictions of a less fatal character. Some may be cured by a prompt remedy, some diseases once contracted are of a lingering nature and others promptly lead the sufferer to the grave. As it is with the life of the body, so it is with that of the soul. If one wishes to avoid mortal sin, he should approach the Holy Table weekly, or at least monthly, and he who desires to avoid slight faults should approach

[14] P. 3, q. 79 a. 1. [15] John vi. 56. [16] *Loc. cit.*, 58.
[17] Co. Trid., sess. 13, *de Euch.*, c. 2.

daily or at least several times in a week, or as often as he can conveniently do so. "Believe me," says St. Cyril of Alexandria, "the Holy Eucharist not only chases away death, but also all maladies." [18]

2. The Holy Eucharist strengthens and fortifies the soul. Since our bodies have not only to be kept healthy and free from sickness, but must also be hardened to support the fatigues of a strenuous life and be inured to all kinds of hardships—the patient endurance of which can only bring success in all arduous undertakings—so likewise our soul must be fortified to fearlessly and perseveringly practice the heroic virtues of a disciple of Christ. Strengthened by the sacrament of the Eucharist, we are enabled to follow in the footsteps of our Master and brave even death itself in the performance of our Christian duties. Our enemies indeed are many; fortitude and perseverance are required to resist as well as to assail them. The ruses of the devil to deceive the unwary are many, and where shall we find sufficient courage to attack him, and wisdom to overcame his deeply laid plans for our ruin, but in Him whom we receive in Holy Communion, and who said of Himself: "All power is given Me in heaven and on earth." We are His soldiers and He bids us follow Him. Will He deny to those, to whom He gives Himself whole and entire in Holy Communion, the armor successfully to fight the battle, which Satan wages against Christ's followers? Let us hear the Apostle: "Brethren, be strengthened in the Lord and in the might of His power. Put you on the armor of God that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil." A little farther he repeats the admonition: "Therefore take unto you the armor of God that you may be able to resist in the evil day and to stand in all things perfect." [19] The Christian warrior, who at the break of day, seeks counsel of his Divine Captain at the Eucharistic Table, receives his complete accoutrement, and thus panoplied goes forth to battle to win new laurels, for he knows that God Himself is fighting at his side. No wonder then that the victory is always assured, for "The mystic Blood," says St. John Chrysostom, "chases the devil far away, and attracts to us the King of

[18] L. 4. in Joan, c. 17.

[19] Ephes. vi. 10 *seq.*

Angels with His celestial armies; the demons flee at the sight of that Divine Blood, while the angels fly to our aid." [20]

Holy Communion also fortifies us against the two other enemies of our spiritual progress, to wit: the evil inclinations of our corrupt nature, allied to the pernicious maxims and alluring examples of a worse than pagan world. Against the latter enemy the sacred body and blood of Our Lord warns us constantly and cries out: "Love not the world nor the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him," [21] and he who tastes daily the sweetness of the mystical union with the source of all good, finds no more attraction in transitory amusements: his soul spurns all worldly pleasure and he experiences such heavenly delight in solitude and in communion with his God, that the empty joys and frivolous festivities of promiscuous gatherings become bitter and nauseating. The lives of thousands of saints, and of those who follow their lead, are ample proof thereof. They have tasted in spirit the sweetness of God, which plentifully lies hidden in this sacrament, as in its fountain. [22] As to the evil inclinations of our nature, the passions of the soul and concupiscence of the flesh, and all inordinate affections which spring from them, St. Cyril of Alexandria [23] teaches us that "When Jesus Christ is in us He appeases the revolts of our flesh. He strengthens our piety and extinguishes the passions of our soul." [24] We should not conclude from this quotation, that the revolts of the flesh are totally subdued, that the passions of the soul are entirely extinguished, and that the Holy Eucharist produces these effects directly; but the holy Doctor's mind is that it strengthens our piety or filial love of God, and thus strengthened, we easily overcome the revolts of the flesh and of all inordinate affections. If the Holy Eucharist removed entirely the disorderly intellectual and sensual appetites, the consequences of original sin, virtue would lose a large share of it merits, and to chastise our bodies and bring them under subjection, as St. Paul did, [25] would seem a useless self-inflicted cruelty, except in so far as it could satisfy for past sins; why then,

[20] Hom. 55 in Joan. [21] John ii. 15. [22] *Following of Christ*, B. 4, c. 4.
[23] Died 444. [24] L. 4 in Joan. [25] 1 Cor. ix. 27.

when the same Apostle so ardently prayed, that God would take away from him the sting of concupiscence, would Our Lord have answered: "My grace is sufficient for thee?" [26] No, our enemies do not vanish because we are armed for the battle; temptations from within and without are not entirely removed, not even by daily Communion; but we are strengthened at the divine banquet and thus the attacks of the enemies of our salvation are seldom felt. Hence St. Bernard could say to his religious: "If any one among you feels less often the vile motions of anger, of envy, of lust or of any other passions, let him offer thanks for it to the Body and Blood of Our Lord, because it is the virtue of this sacrament which operates such happy results." [27]

St. Thomas explains, in his usual, happy and convincing way, the effects of the Holy Eucharist on the intellectual and sensual appetites of our nature, vitiated by original sin: "Although this sacrament," he says, "is not directly ordained to diminish concupiscence, it diminishes it as a consequence by an increase of charity, because, as St. Augustine says, an increase of charity is a decrease of cupidity. It (charity) directly confirms the heart of man in virtue, by which he is preserved from sin." [28] Forsooth, we conquer an enemy in two ways, one directly, by taking away his armor, in which he confides, and again indirectly by putting on a superior armor, or by calling an invincible ally to assist us. Thus the Holy Eucharist makes us invincible, as God then fights with us and for us, although the intellectual and sensual appetites may have lost nothing of their former violence. All vices are subdued directly by mortifications, but indirectly by the practice of the virtues opposed to them, as well as by putting on the armor of God, that is, by the divine virtue of charity, which fortifies us and brings the whole celestial court to our aid.

3. The Holy Eucharist repairs the supernatural losses sustained by the soul. We have seen that the second effect of the holy Eucharist brings an increase of supernatural life, and with it comes an increase of all the virtues and of the gifts of the Holy Ghost; for the supernatural life of the soul is nothing else than habitual or sanctifying grace, and

[26] 2 Cor. xii. 7-9. [27] *Serm. de Baptismo.* [28] P. 3, q. 79 a. 7 to 3.

with it "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, Who is given to us." [29] With the virtues, but mainly with charity, which perfects them all, we easily overcome all the enemies of our salvation and in that the second effect of frequent Holy Communion consists.

When we say that the Holy Eucharist repairs the losses of the supernatural life sustained by the soul, we only add a new phase, or a new aspect to its other wonderful effects already mentioned; for, if Holy Communion strengthens the supernatural life of the soul, as a consequence, it repairs the losses which the soul sustained since its last refection at the celestial banquet. There is no question here of mortal sin, which deprives the soul of all supernatural life, but of venial sin, of imperfections, of less important omissions, of slight negligences which are committed daily, even in the practice of our ordinary duties. These slight offenses or imperfections, if often committed, gradually so weaken the soul, that it easily becomes a prey to the attacks of its enemies, unless its strength be restored and its losses repaired every day or at least frequently.

The body needs exercise to maintain its normal circulation of the blood and to keep its vital organs free from noxious obstructions, but that very exercise and the friction and heat of its delicate organism, which is always in action, as well as the application of the intellect, memory and will, weaken the body and therefore daily wholesome food is required to restore its former vigor. Likewise the soul has its ordinary obligations to perform, and on account of the dissipation of the mind, of the forgetfulness of God's presence and of other imperfections, without mentioning the many venial sins that are committed daily, the soul's supernatural strength suffers losses, which would gradually deprive it of the life of grace, unless its losses be repaired and its strength restored at the celestial banquet. The heavenly food reanimates our courage, chases away tepidity by the ardor of charity, enlightens the intellect, invigorates the will, subjects concupiscence to the rule of reason, and directs the passions in their proper channels of usefulness; thus, all our losses being repaired, we continue to add victory to

[29] Rom. v. 5.

victory, in the battles waged daily with our enemies from within and without.

4. The Holy Eucharist delights pious and devout souls. One of the greatest enjoyments of this life is the pleasurable satisfaction which a hungry man experiences from a well prepared meal. Good health and a good appetite are indispensable, but we should not create a false appetite by a prolonged fast; for then a man's organs being weakened, he is no longer able to assimilate his food and by satisfying entirely his craving, he may endanger his health. A moderate exercise or ordinary labor for a workman, creates the healthiest appetite. Likewise our soul will experience in the Holy Eucharist a delight surpassing all other earthly joys, if it have a true appetite for this heavenly food and provided it be otherwise well disposed. This spiritual appetite is nothing else than an earnest desire to receive the Bread of life, based upon a lively faith and an ardent love of the Lord of heaven and earth, who deigns to fix His abode within us. This ardent desire is not obtained by abstaining from Holy Communion, but the best and most effectual means to secure it, is by a spirit of humility and self-denial; by a lively faith, an ardent charity, by meditating on the Real Presence and the ineffable love of Jesus manifested in it, by fervent prayer and the amorous contemplation of the infinite perfections of Him, who is to become our Guest.

Sensual affections or sensible devotion is not essential to a worthy Communion, but it should not be despised, as it is apt to produce a more ardent desire to be united to the Source of all graces.

If sensible devotion is not required for devout Communion, neither is the absence of the spiritual delight, which usually accompanies a devout Communion, a sufficient reason to abstain from communicating often; for even without it, the Holy Eucharist will not fail to confer the fervor of charity, if the recipient have a proper intention and be free from mortal sin. St. Thomas [30] teaches that "The sacrament is a spiritual manducation which possesses an actual delectation" or as he expresses it in the body of the argu-

[30] P. 3, q. 79 a. 8 to 12.

ment, "it is a kind of actual refection of spiritual sweetness" and this effect is frustrated by a deliberate venial sin committed in the act of communicating, *e. g.,* by a wilful distraction or a slightly evil intention, and notwithstanding that, an increase of habitual grace or of charity, which is the principal fruit of the sacrament, is not lost.[31] It is in this sense and with this restriction that we must understand St. Cyprian's beautiful eulogy of this fourth fruit of Holy Communion: "This Bread of angels," says the holy Doctor, "containing in itself all delights, satisfies by an admirable virtue the taste of all those who receive it worthily and with devotion; it satiates better than the manna of the desert and surpasses the relish of all sensual pleasures, the sweetness of all voluptuousness."[32] Finally this Bread from heaven often procures such a great interior consolation to pious and devout communicants that this spiritual delight is not confined to the soul, but that the body in some manner partakes of the interior joy of the soul: they seem unable to control the emotions of their heart, they weep for joy, their whole demeanor reflects the intense and ardent love of their soul for their Divine Guest; they lovingly commune with Him and seem to detain Him in their sweet embrace. Happy souls who in this dreary waste, in this desert home have already a foretaste of the delights of heaven.

III. Preparation for Holy Communion. Acts which should precede it.

1. We have now considered the effects of the Holy Eucharist, how it strengthens the supernatural life of the soul, deadens the passions, mortifies concupiscence, cures the spiritual languor of the soul, and when we receive it with the proper disposition, how it even imparts to the soul a delight surpassing all the pleasures of this world. The nature of the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist will now point out to us the dispositions required in the recipient to receive it worthily.

Before anything else, he who intends to communicate must put his house in order to receive so great a Guest. We owe it to Him as well as to ourselves, that our prep-

[31] *Cfr.* St. Alphonsus Liguori, *Theol. Mor.,* L. 6, Tract 3, no. 270.

[32] *Serm. d. Coena Dom.*

aration should be thorough, because the greater the personage, the greater and more enthusiastic must be the reception, and to ourselves, for there can be no greater misfortune, no greater evil than to receive unworthily the body and blood of Our Lord. "Therefore," says the Apostle "whosoever shall eat this bread and drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." [33]

To be free from mortal sin is therefore the most necessary disposition of the soul; but that is not enough; we should be also free from all affection to venial sin, for he, who receives a trusted and respected friend, will not be satisfied with removing what may mortally wound him, but will also destroy or remove whatever may displease him. An affection to venial sin greatly displeases Our Lord; for by it, we really love some person, some trifling thing, some pleasure or an act of self-will, more than God, although He may not have forbidden those attachments under pain of mortal sin. He who has an affection for venial sin and determines not to shun the greatest of all evils after mortal sin, is like a man, who stands on the brink of a precipice, into which he may be hurled by the first blast of wind. He thus stands on the brink of sin. How much fruit can such a one expect from Holy Communion? Not enough to repair the daily waste of his supernatural life, which venial sin causes. Therefore he loses not only the spiritual delight contained in the sacrament, but a great part of all its salutary effects, and as he is not able to repair the loss which he sustains daily, he soon falls into mortal sin.

2. Besides, in order to obtain the abundant fruits of our daily or frequent communions, we should approach the Holy Table with a lively faith, with profound humility and a childlike confidence in God's goodness, and lastly with an ardent charity which begets a longing and craving for the Eucharistic Bread.

(a) Lively faith. To approach the Holy Table with the proper dispositions we must know what we receive in Holy Communion. Only faith can teach us, for the senses tell us nothing of what is contained under the sacramental

[33] 1 Cor. xi. 27.

veil, and what they tell us, is contrary to the reality. Here the sight, the taste, the touch and the other senses are deceived and only the hearing can be trusted, as St. Thomas teaches;[34] but it is a hearing which springs from the voice of Eternal Truth and begets, not a conviction from reason, but a belief based on the veracity of God. Not only are our senses deceived, but our mind is not able to understand the Real Presence under the appearance of a little bread and wine. The laws of nature are here suspended: nowhere else in nature do the accidents exist without their substance. The omnipotent Creator of heaven and earth can alone be the Author of the derogation to, and suspension of the physical laws, which govern the created world. In the Holy Eucharist the substance of the bread and wine has been changed into the substance of the body and blood of Our Lord, and the accidents of the bread and wine remain as a veil under which the real body and blood of the Savior, together with His soul and divinity, are hidden. Notwithstanding this incomprehensible mystery, we believe whatever Christ the Son of God has said and taught, for nothing can be truer than the Truth.[35] We confess then that under the sacramental form of bread and wine, Jesus is whole and entire, as well as in every part of the consecrated species. He is true God and true man. He is the only Son of God, equal to His Father from all eternity and as man, He is the only son of the Blessed Virgin, born in time and immolated on the Cross as a Victim for our salvation. Faith sees the Blessed Sacrament on our altars surrounded by the majesty of the omnipotent God, and the Savior, who gives Himself to us, is the Lamb of God slain for our redemption. He now sits on a throne, resplendent in glory, with His Father in heaven, and the ancients and the whole court of heaven say with a loud voice: "The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory and benediction,[36] but the court of heaven is transferred upon earth as well, wherever the Lamb is present under the veil of the sacrament, and there again we may see, with the eyes of faith, a like throne and before that throne, thousands of thousands prostrated in reverential

[34] *Hymn Adoro Te.* [35] *Loc. cit.* [36] Apoc. v. 12.

awe and all saying: "To Him that sitteth on the throne and to the Lamb, benediction and honor and glory and power, forever and ever." [37]

(b) Humility. What reverential awe, what profound humility, the faith in the Real Presence ought to inspire in us! If with St. John Chrysostom we have represented to ourselves a multitude of angels surrounding our altars—and well we may, for it is not conceivable that the Father could leave His only Son unattended, after His entrance into glory—or if with St. Gregory we have imagined the heavens opening at the voice of the priest, and the angels of heaven intoning their celestial hymns beside the tabernacle, and if, after that, we turn our eyes upon ourselves, who are so worthless, miserable and sinful, what can we do in the presence of the infinite God, who deigns to visit us and make His abode with us, but profoundly humble ourselves, impressed with the deepest reverence for the dignity of our Host, and exclaim with the centurion: "O Lord! I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof" [38] or with David: "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?" [39] Should we, who are conscious of our many transgressions and grievous offenses, by which we share in the guilt of those who crucified Our Lord, should we, I say, in view of our many ingratitudes, of our coldness, indifference and unfaithfulness in His service, not hide our faces for shame and like the publican strike our breast, saying: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner?" [40]

(c) An ardent love of the Holy Eucharist and a child-like confidence in God's infinite bounty, are also taught us by our faith. God is not only infinitely good in Himself, but infinitely good to us within the limits of His boundless wisdom and justice. Wisdom, holiness and justice demanded that God should create all things for His greater honor and glory and therefore demanded also man's obedience and service, but in His ineffable bounty He requires only a short and insignificant service for an eternal reward, the happiness of which cannot be conceived by the intellect of man. When man had refused that service, and through it lost his eternal destiny, an eternal punishment alone could

[37] *Ibid.*, 13. [38] Matt. viii. 8. [39] Ps. viii. 5. [40] Luke xviii. 13.

satisfy God's justice, unless the all-wise God found a means to reconcile mercy with justice. This means of reconciling man with his Maker was found, but at what price? The Son of God became man and satisfied for our race by washing our sins in His blood. Can love go farther? Can we doubt any longer that it is proper of our Merciful God to share His attributes and above all His supreme happiness with His creatures? Now, this is the God infinitely good by nature and infinitely good to us, who offers Himself for the food of our souls in Holy Communion. He dreaded not to become man in the womb of the Virgin and neither does He dread to enter the dwelling of our body and to become our honored Guest. He has created us, He has redeemed us when we were lost and He preserves us, and that preservation is but a continual creation. He comes in the Holy Eucharist as the supernatural food of our souls; He comes also as a physician to cure all our ailments. He is infinitely rich and He desires to share His wealth with us. Should all this not force us to love a God so infinitely good in Himself and who is also our good, as all good we possess comes from Him, as well as all good and happiness we hope for in the next world? Should we not receive so good a God with the utmost confidence, with the most tender affection? Notwithstanding, we, so needy and miserable, have so little to ask when He visits us. Ah! if we could imitate little children who ask of their parents everything they like! Why not ask of Our Lord all that we think is good for us? Make your needs known to Him, ask with a childlike trust in His fatherly affection, and it shall be given unto you.

Our love for Jesus in the Holy Eucharist should be a perfect love and therefore we should love Him more for His sake than for our own; we should then love Him because He is infinitely lovable and amiable. What are now the principal qualities of that love? If our love be truly ardent, it should be, according to St. Bernard; inseparable, so that nothing can separate us from the love of our Savior; it should be insatiable, so that our soul can never be fully satisfied nor surfeited, and will always cry: more, more; it should be invincible, and hence strong enough to overcome all obstacles; it should be delightful, for who does not ex-

perience delight with those he tenderly loves; it should be benevolent, that is, our soul should thirst for it, with an earnest desire to bring the whole world at the feet of Jesus, and finally, the love of the Savior should contain, in imitation of the Apostle, a longing desire to be dissolved and to live with Christ.

(d) We have just mentioned the earnest desire for the Eucharist, as a quality of the love we should have, when about to communicate. The longing for it is necessary to relish a true spiritual delight from its reception. This earnest desire, this spiritual appetite or hunger is likewise indispensable, if we wish to secure all the other salutary effects from our frequent communions.

To the weakness of our desire of the Bread of Life may generally be attributed the little progress made towards perfection, and therefore the earnest desire should be stimulated, for the fruits of Holy Communion are proportionate to the desire with which we receive it. Our miseries, the needs of our soul and body, and our absolute dependence on God for the least grace or the smallest favor, and on the other hand the infinite goodness of God, who is more eager to impart His manifold gifts, than we are to receive them, are the principal motives to urge us on, always to thirst for the Divine Banquet, as our only support and our only hope. We should at all times, but especially in troubles and tribulation, feel such a need of the Holy Eucharist, that our hearts cry out with David: "As the heart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God." [41] We ought to long for the Eucharistic Banquet as an infant seeks its mother's breast, or as the woman who was under an issue of blood twelve years, desired to touch the hem of the Savior's garment, "for she said: If I shall but touch His garment, I shall be whole." [42] Thus, when we devoutly and piously approach the Holy Table, an earnest desire of it should be linked with a childish confidence in God's goodness and mercy, and these together with a lively faith and an ardent love for the Savior are the principal dispositions that will promote an intimate and fruitful union with our Blessed Lord.

[41] Ps. xli. 2. [42] Mark v. 28.

Daily or Frequent Communion

Whatever doubts may have existed in the minds of Catholics regarding daily and frequent Communion, and the pious dispositions required from the part of communicants, they are now definitely solved by a decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Council, of which we here append the most essential parts:

1. Frequent and daily Communion, as a thing most earnestly desired by Christ Our Lord and by the Catholic Church, should be open to all the faithful, of whatever rank and condition of life; so that no one who is in the state of grace, and who approaches the Holy Table with a right and devout intention, can lawfully be hindered therefrom.

2. A right intention consists in this: that he who approaches the Holy Table should do so, not out of routine, or vainglory, or human respect, but for the purpose of pleasing God, of being more closely united with Him by charity, and of seeking this divine remedy for his weaknesses and defects.

3. Although it is more expedient, that those who communicate frequently or daily, should be free from venial sins, especially from such as are fully deliberate, and from any affection thereto, nevertheless it is sufficient that they be free from mortal sin, with the purpose of never sinning mortally in the future; and if they have this sincere purpose, it is impossible that daily communicants should not gradually free themselves from even venial sins, and from all affection therefor.

4. But whereas the sacraments of the New Law, although they take effect *ex opere operato*, nevertheless produce a greater effect in proportion to the good disposition of the recipient, therefore, care is to be taken that Holy Communion be preceded by a serious preparation, and followed by a suitable thanksgiving, according to each one's strength, circumstances and duties.

5. That the practice of frequent and daily Communion may be carried out with greater fruit and more abundant merit, the confessor's advice should be asked. Confessors, however, are to be careful not to dissuade any one from

frequent and daily Communion, provided that he be in the state of grace and approach with a right intention.

6. But since is is plain that, by the frequent or daily reception of the Holy Eucharist, union with Christ is fostered, spiritual life more abundantly sustained, the soul more richly endowed with virtues, and an even surer pledge of everlasting happiness bestowed on the recipient, therefore, parish priests, confessors, and preachers—in accordance with the approved teaching of the Roman Catechism [43]—are frequently and with great zeal to exhort the faithful to this devout and salutary practice.

7. Frequent and daily Communion is to be promoted especially in Religious Orders and Congregations of all kinds; with regard to which, however, the Decree "Quemadmodum," issued on December 17th, 1890, by the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, is to remain in force. It is also to be promoted especially in ecclesiastical seminaries, where students are preparing for the service of the altar, as well as in all Christian establishments of whatever kind for the training of youth.

8. In the case of Religious Institutes, whether of solemn or simple vows, in whose rules, or constitutions, or calendars, Communion is assigned to certain fixed days, such regulations are to be regarded as directive, and not preceptive. In such cases the appointed number of Communions should be regarded as a minimum, and not as setting a limit to the devotion of the religious. Therefore, freedom of access to the Eucharistic Table, whether more frequently or daily, must always be allowed them, according to the principles laid down in this Decree. And in order that all religious of both sexes may clearly understand the provisions of this Decree, the superior of each house is to see that it be read in community in the vernacular, every year within the octave of the Feast of Corpus Christi.

9. Finally, after the publication of this Decree, all ecclesiastical writers are to cease from contentious controversies concerning the dispositions required for frequent and daily Communion.

All this having been reported to His Holiness, Pope

[43] Part 2, Cat. 4, N. 63.

Pius X., by the undersigned Secretary of the Sacred Congregation, in an audience held on December 17th, 1905, His Holiness ratified and confirmed the present Decree and ordered it to be published, anything to the contrary notwithstanding. He further ordered that it should be sent to all local Ordinaries and regular Prelates, to be communicated by them to their respective seminaries, parishes, religious institutes and priests; and that in their reports concerning the state of their respective dioceses or institutes, they should inform the Holy See concerning the execution of the matters therein determined.

Given at Rome, the 20th day of December, 1905.

VINCENT, CARD., *Bishop of Palestrina, Prefect.*

CAJETAN DE LAI, *Secretary.*

DECREE

On the confession of daily communicants,

(EXTRACT)

To all the faithful who, being in the state of grace and having a right and devout intention, are accustomed daily to receive the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, even if they once or twice in the week omit their daily Communion, our Most Holy Father Pius X. grants that they may avail themselves of the indult of Clement XIII, *i. e.*, to gain all the indulgences (except those of the Jubilee) without the weekly confession, which in other circumstances is still of obligation for rightly gaining the indulgences, that occur during the week. His Holiness, morever, has graciously declared that this privilege will hold good in future times, anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at Rome the 14th day of February, 1906.

A. CARDINAL TIPETI, *Prefect.*

D. PANICI, *Archbishop of Laodicea, Secretary.*

In view of the foregoing decree, all we can add to it, is to exhort all those who tend toward perfection, to approach the Holy Table every day, unless they are excused on account of some serious impediment or other serious cause. We eat daily to restore the strength of our body, weakened by physical and intellectual activity, and with more reason should we receive Holy Communion daily to repair the loss of our spiritual vitality through our daily imperfections or deliberate venial sins. We should do more; for it is a duty, prompted by charity towards our neighbor, to induce those over whom we have any influence to adopt this salutary practice of daily or at least frequent Communion.

It is a duty of every Christian to return to the practice of the Apostolic times, when the faithful "Continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart." [44] We learn from other parts of Holy Scripture what is understood by the breaking of bread, and St. Denis the Areopagite [45] explains the practice: "In the primitive church," he says, "all those who assisted at the consecration of the Eucharist, participated in the sacramental Communion," [46] and the decree of Pope Anaclete [47] further illustrates the meaning of the citation taken from the Acts. It reads as follows: "Let all communicate after consecration, if they will not that the doors of the church be barred against them; because the Apostles have established that custom which the holy Church of Rome faithfully observes." [48] St. Jerome writing to Pamachius confirms the Roman custom: "I know that it is a custom in Rome for the faithful to receive every day the body of Jesus Christ." St. Ambrose [49] speaking of the Holy Eucharist, writes: "Receive daily what may be daily useful. Live in such a manner that you may be worthy to receive it every day. He who is not worthy of receiving it daily, is not worthy of it even after a year." [50] St. Augustine after quoting St. Ambrose, adds: "This is a daily bread: receive it daily that it may be daily profitable unto you." [51] The Council of

[44] Acts ii. 46. [45] Died about 95 A. D. [46] Hier. Eccl. c. 13.
[47] Died 95. [48] Apud. Grat. [49] Died 397.
[50] L. 5 *de Sacram*, c. 4. [51] *De Verbo Dom.*, Serm. 28.

Trent expressed the desire that all who assist at Mass should communicate, in the following words: "The Holy Synod would fain indeed that at each Mass the faithful assisting thereat would communicate, not only through spiritual affection only, but also by the sacramental reception of the Eucharist, that they may participate more abundantly in the fruit of the Holy Sacrifice." [52]

The catechism of the Council of Trent published by order of Pope St. Gregory V. is still more urgent; for having cited St. Augustine, who quoted St. Ambrose, saying: "Live in such a manner as to be able to receive daily," it subjoins: "It will therefore be the duty of the pastor frequently to admonish the faithful, that, as they deem it necessary to supply daily food for the body, they should also be solicitous to feed and nourish the soul every day with this heavenly food. The soul stands not less in need of spiritual, than the body of corporal food." [53]

From this short exposition of daily Communion, we can only come to one conclusion for those who tend to perfection, and it is, that if they neglect frequently, for reasons of slight consequence, to fortify and sanctify their souls with the Bread of Angels, they can hardly expect the necessary graces to make progress in virtue from Him who has said: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you." [54] To the sinful neglect of the Eucharistic food, must be ascribed that in our day we find so few Christians, outside the cloister and religious institutes, who bring luster to the Church by their exemplary and holy lives. Those who seek worldly pleasures as their main goal, cannot enjoy the spiritual consolation and the heavenly delights contained in the Holy Eucharist. Jesus who repeatedly sounds the warning: "Love not the world nor the things that are in the world," will not unite Himself intimately with, nor bestow His choicest spiritual favors on those whose heart is divided, and who therefore cannot make the small sacrifices to approach the Holy Table daily or at least frequently.

[52] Sess. xxii., ch. 6. [53] *Cat. Rom. De Euch.*, N. 9.
[54] John vi. 54.

Spiritual Communion.

Although daily Communion should, in accordance with the earnest desire of Pope Pius X. become general among all classes of people, and therefore, there appears to be no reasonable ground for spiritual communions, nevertheless the latter is still very useful to pious and devout souls who aim at perfection. It has the advantage that it may be made, not only on days on which we are prevented from communicating, but at any moment of the day and night, as well as in all places whatsoever.

What is spiritual communion? It is nothing else than a longing, an earnest desire to receive the adorable sacrament of the Holy Eucharist: "Those are baptized and communicate spiritually (not sacramentally) who long to receive these sacraments instituted by Jesus Christ." [55] "Eat the bread of the altar spiritually," says St. Augustine, "bring innocence to the altar," [56] giving us to understand that sacramental communion is for those who are free from the guilt of mortal sin, but that even sinners may communicate spiritually; and if their desire to partake of the Bread of angels be accompanied by charity and a detestation of their sins, spiritual communion will restore them to the friendship of God. They in particular will experience and taste how sweet the Lord is. Thus, as the Angelic Doctor teaches, "He eats spiritually Jesus Christ contained in the Eucharist, if believing in Him, he desires to receive the sacrament." [57]

Who cannot see but that spiritual communion gives a taste for things divine and is an excellent preparation for sacramental Communion; for he who sincerely and frequently desires to be comforted at the Holy Table, obtains thereby a greater love for it, and thus he will receive it sacramentally with greater devotion, and as often as his condition will allow. Spiritual communion renders one worthy of greater favors from God, and an earnest desire to be strengthened by the Bread of Life, often produces more abundant salutary effects in the soul than a sacramental Communion received with less fervor." [58]

[55] St. Thomas, p. 3q. 80 a. 1 to 3.

[56] *Super. Joan.*, Tract 26. [57] *Loc. cit.*, a. 2. [58] Hamon, S. S.

To make a spiritual communion that will bring us many blessings, we should in general observe all the acts which we usually perform before and after a sacramental Communion. First of all, we should place ourselves in the presence of God and make a sincere act of contrition for all our sins, including all imperfections, and do it with the laudable intention of preparing a suitable abode for Our Lord in our interior. Even then we should deeply regret not to be able to offer a better dwelling for the Divine Majesty, for the infinitely holy God, who abhors the least fault; but as in His infinite bounty He demands a place under our roof, His boundless goodness strengthens our confidence, and convinces us that He Himself will prepare our souls, to become a worthy abode for so great a Guest. Then striking our breast we should say: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; but only say the word and Thy servant shall be healed." After this preparation we should, in thought or in word, express the ardent longing of our soul to receive and welcome the Lord of heaven and earth, who deigns to visit us. This is proper, as it is only the fulfilment of the Savior's desire, which He expressed so emphatically and affectionately before the institution of the Blessed Eucharist, when He said: "With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you before I suffer." [59] Neither is the desire unwarranted, for Jesus has said: "If any one love Me.... My Father will love him, and We will make Our abode with him," [60] and love or appreciation of anything comes before the desire of it. Therefore the conviction that our Blessed Lord quickly responds to our eager desire to receive His visit, is well grounded.

After this we make our adoration, our thanksgiving and our petitions for new favors, as we are wont to do after all sacramental Communions, and it is well that we should persevere in these devout sentiments, as long as we feel any pious emotions, fervor or spiritual consolation in conversing with our amiable Visitor. Finally we should make a strong resolution so to amend our lives that we may become worthy of Our Lord's frequent visits. We have already said that spiritual communion may be made at all times, but there

[59] Luke xxii. 15. [60] John xiv. 23.

are times when it is especially advisable, as when we make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament or when we are present when the priest gives Holy Communion to the people, and above all, when we assist at the holy sacrifice of the Mass, for by our spiritual communion when the priest communicates sacramentally, we identify ourselves with the priest, who offers the unbloody sacrifice, and thus we participate in a large measure in the fruit of the august worship offered to the triune God.

ARTICLE XII

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin and the Saints

Eleventh Means of Perfection

I. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin a Great Means of Perfection—II. The Reasons of the Efficacy of the Devotion—Respect of Jesus Christ for His Mother—Mary's Merits—She Can and Will Help Us—III. Confidence in Mary is Well Placed—IV. Effects of Mary's Protection—V. Worship of the Mother of God, (a) On the Part of Sinners; (b) Exterior Duties; Interior Devotion—VI. Means to Excite Devotion to Mary in the Hearts of All; Her Dignity, Her Goodness.

I. Our Christian doctrine distinguishes three kinds of religious worship: that of *latria,* that of *dulia* and that of *hyperdulia.* The supreme worship or that of latria is due to God alone, as the Source of all good, and as the Creator and Ruler of heaven and earth. Besides, the infinitely wise and just God wills that an inferior worship be rendered to His angels and saints: to the former, as to spirits ministering unto Him and to the latter, as to His friends and servants, who have by their lives upon earth served Him faithfully, and now enjoy with Him in heaven the reward of their virtues. We call the worship due to all the faithful servants of God, whether saints or angels, *dulia;* but among all the servants of God, there is one who was chosen by God Himself, as an instrument in His designs for man's redemption, after the fall of our first parents, and that privileged being is the Mother of His only-begotten Son, who assumed human nature in her undefiled and virginal womb. Her name was Mary, and all the true servants of God call her, by a most sweet and endearing name, the Blessed Virgin Mary. As her merits whilst on earth were proportionate to her high dignity, and as she has therefore been crowned Queen of angels and saints, the highest worship of dulia is due her, and to distinguish it from all other worship, in-

ferior to that of latria, theologicans call it hyperdulia. By this is meant that the highest of all worship becoming a creature, is due to her, whom we rightly call the Mother of God. She is truly the Mother of God, because she conceived in her womb and gave birth to the Redeemer, who was both God and man. Holy Scripture and tradition teach us also that she remained a virgin both before and after the birth of her Son, and by the Angel Gabriel she was saluted by the title "full of grace." Finally by a solemn decree of Pius IX., the Church added to all her titles that of Immaculate in her conception of St. Joachim and St. Ann, her illustrious parents.

The title of Mother of God places her far above the hierarchies of the angels, but if we now consider the relationship which, owing to her Divine Maternity, she bears to the three persons of the Blessed Trinity, we see a still greater reason to wonder at her exalted dignity. All her titles are comprised in the name by which the Blessed Virgin is designated: the Immaculate Virgin Mary Mother of God, except the title "full of grace," but this follows from her other three titles, for according to St. Jerome, the word Mary means in Hebrew mistress, and through her Divine Maternity the Blessed Virgin became mistress of heaven and earth, enriched with the fullness of grace or that grace which becomes her rank and dignity.

The Apostles' Creed has for its second article, the following: "And (I believe) in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary" and the Angel Gabriel likewise tells us that the Son of God was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in her virginal womb; for he said to Mary: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee and therefore the Holy who shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." [1] Whether we should understand by the power of the Most High, the power of one of the Persons of the Blessed Trinity or, as is most probable, the power of the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, it is certain that the Incarnation was effected by the three Persons; for all that is done outside of the Trinity is

[1] Luke i. 35.

common to the three. We may distinguish in the Incarnation three operations terminating in the assumption of the human nature by the Son of God, who alone became man: the act of creating a soul for Christ, is attributed to the Father; the next operation was to unite, by the power of the Holy Ghost, the soul thus created to the pure and undefiled blood of the Virgin, and thereby to give life to the organized body, formed from her pure blood, and finally at the same instant, the Son of God assumed human nature and in that manner He remained what He was, but assumed what He had not, viz.: a true human body and soul. The Incarnation is attributed to the Holy Ghost, as Holy Scripture and the Apostles' Creed clearly testify, because it was a work of love, and the Holy Ghost is the immutable love of the Father and the Son, or, because the Incarnation tends to the sanctification and holiness of the human race and this again is attributed to the Holy Ghost.

The operation, by which the Incarnation was effected, being ascribed to the Holy Ghost, discloses to us a new relationship between Him and the Blessed Virgin; for by it He gave fecundity to her virginal womb and therefore we have a right to call the Virgin Mother, the Spouse of the Holy Ghost. This ineffable relationship, which enhances still more the exalted dignity of our Blessed Mother and fills the hearts of her children with inexpressible delight, emboldens us to consider also her relationship with God the Father. The Father as well as the Son and the Holy Ghost willed the Incarnation, and the Father almighty recognized in the Incarnation the sacred humanity of His Son, as inseparable from and hypostatically united to the person of His first Begotten. He had also, as a consequence, to recognize the Divine Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of His Son, which was equivalent to adopting her as His well-beloved daughter. Thus we may add two more titles to the four already enumerated, as the attributes of our heavenly Queen and salute her in an ecstasy of joy in the following words: "Hail, Mary, full of grace; thou art the Immaculate Virgin Mother of the Son of God; thou art the adopted Daughter of God the Father and the Spouse of the Holy Ghost. Hail!"

II. The Blessed Virgin was intended by God to be an instrument of the Redemption and she, who so willingly, devotedly and generously co-operated in the execution of His designs, was chosen to become the Mother of the Redeemer: and in view of her Divine Maternity, she was enriched with all the virtues of her exalted dignity and with the prerogatives of her sublime state. These raise her far above the blessed in heaven and above all the angelic choirs and therefore she is more powerful with her Divine Son than all the united efforts of all rational beings, whether angels or men.

To angels and saints honor and veneration are due: to the former, as ministering unto God and to the latter, as to friends and servants of God, who while on earth walked in the footsteps of the Savior and have heeded His call: "Deny yourselves, take up your cross and follow Me." To the angels and saints, we owe a devotion proportionate to their merits and dignity, but if we honor them when the Church honors them, and in the manner the Church honors them, we fulfill our duty, although each one, according to his inclination, may reverence some particular saint or angel, and place himself under the protection of the angel or saint of his choice, to obtain special favors in accordance with the practice of the Church.

We have outlined more particularly the titles of the Blessed Virgin, because her vested rights over angels and saints, as well as her sublime dignity are based upon them, and thus her pre-eminence over all created or possible creatures of God, demands from us a special devotion, which makes for spiritual progress and tends to that supernatural perfection to which all Christians should aspire.

III. We will show first that devotion to the Mother of God assures our salvation and secondly, that it is an adequate and sure means to attain perfection.

(a) The devotion to Mary is a sign of predestination.

We have seen that the Blessed Virgin Mary is truly the Mother of God, and therefore she can and must call the Son of God her Son. Do we Christians understand what this means? Can we conceive in our minds the power it bestows upon the Virgin Mother? Have not her prayers

all the force of a command? The Ruler of heaven and earth commands us to honor our father and our mother, and will the Divine Legislator disregard His own law and thus make it void? No, we all answer: God cannot contradict Himself; and therefore, the Mother of God is all-powerful with her Divine Son, the most loving and most obedient of all sons, who has merited through His passion and death all graces necessary and useful to the salvation of every human being. The Church in her liturgy applies the following words of Holy Scripture to our Blessed Mother: "He that shall find Me, shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord." [2]

The life referred to in this text is the supernatural life of the soul or sanctifying grace, necessary for entrance into heaven and indispensable to salvation. For that reason, St. Athanasius speaks of the Virgin Mary as the new Eve, for as the old Eve was the mother of all men according to the flesh, the new Eve is the mother of all those who live the life of grace: "The Blessed Virgin Mary, the new Eve, is called the mother of life, because it is she who gives and preserves life eternal for all the living." [3] Likewise all the saints, who spoke on Mary's prerogatives, have unanimously declared that a child of Mary cannot perish or, as some have expressed it: we can do nothing without Mary, but with her we can do everything, and the reason is that "God wills," says St. Bernard, "that all graces should pass through the hands of Mary." "As it is impossible," says St. Antoninus, "that they, from whom Mary turns away her merciful looks, can be saved; likewise they whom she regards with pity, and whom she takes under her protection, shall necessarily be glorified." [4]

These truths flow directly from the dignity and power of Mary, from her love and affection for her Divine Son, and from the love and affection that her Son Jesus has for her. As Mother of the Redeemer, Mary is all-powerful; He can refuse nothing to a Mother He so dearly loves. He has made her the treasurer of all the graces of Heaven and the dispenser of all His riches. Thus it behooved the Son of

[2] Prov. viii. 35. [3] *Serm. de Deipara.*

[4] Part IV, Tit. 15, c. 14.

God to honor her, who was chosen to be His Mother, who bore Him in her womb and who fed Him with her milk.

On the other hand Mary dearly loves those whom her Son loves, and since He has sacrificed His life, yea the last drop of His blood, for our salvation, our Blessed Mother has our spiritual welfare so much at heart, that she never ceases to help by her prayers those for whom Jesus shed His sacred blood, and whereas they who have recourse to her and invoke her protecion, honor the Son by honoring His Mother, they have the primary right to her all-powerful prayers and to the mercies of the Savior.

There is a second reason why the Blessed Mother of Jesus desires so ardently our salvation: she is our Mother by the last will and testament of her Divine Son. It is the common opinion of the commentators of Holy Scripture that when Our Lord, in His agony on the Cross, turned to the beloved Apostle St. John and to the Blessed Virgin and said to the former: "Son, behold thy Mother," and to the latter: "Woman, behold thy son," all those for whom the Savior died were included with the beloved disciple in that wonderful bequest; and therefore it becomes our bounden duty to honor the Mother of Jesus as our Mother, and we have thereby the assurance that she loves us in return as her children; but if we wish to obtain her motherly affection, it behooves us to choose her as our Mother and honor her as such.

We must profess, it is true, a great devotion to all the saints and angels of heaven, but the efficacy of their prayers rests solely on the mercy of God, whilst the power of Mary's prayers is based upon her dignity and especially upon her Divine Maternity, and thus her Divine Son can refuse her nothing. "The prayer of the saints," said St. Antoninus, "is not based on their merits, but solely on the mercy of God, whilst that of Mary lays claim to the Savior's graces in virtue of the rights which nature and the Gospel give her; for a son is not only obliged to honor his mother, but also to obey her, as the natural law demands.

(b) The devotion to the Blessed Virgin is an excellent means of perfection. The same arguments we employed to prove that the devotion to our Blessed Mother insures our

salvation, hold good to impress upon us the necessity of having recourse to her if we desire to attain perfection.

It is indubitable that the Savior desires the perfection of our souls; for He has said: "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect," [5] and this is not a simple request or counsel, but an urgent command, for we learn it from the Apostle who teaches us: "This is the will of God your sanctification." [6] Consequently, if God wills it, our tender Mother wills it also; for nothing is dearer to her than to see us comply with her Son's commands. She wills it also because she loves us, and because perfection insures us a greater reward and glory hereafter. And as she wills all good for us, the omnipotence of her prayers can also procure us all good, for the Father cannot refuse anything to His beloved daughter, her loving Son obeys her least desire and the Holy Ghost is too good a Spouse to deny her entreaties. "See," says St. Bernard, "by what love the Lord wills that we honor Mary, as He has placed in her the plenitude of all good to compel us to recognize that all that we have of hope, grace and salvation, is an effect of her bounty," and thereafter he addresses her with the most tender affection: "It is from Thee," he says, "that all the power of strong souls comes, for there is no virtue that is not a ray of Thy splendour." [7]

All the saints are unanimous in recognizing the Blessed Virgin as the channel of all graces, and if until now we have not felt the effects, as we desire, of her powerful patronage, we must attribute it to our want of confidence in her omnipotent intercession, or to a want of co-operation with the many spiritual favors, which have come to us through her motherly care. We should not conclude from the all-powerful patronage which the Blessed Virgin exerts in favor of her clients, that nothing further is demanded of us to be able to lead pious and holy lives, to save our souls and to make steady progress in virtue, than to recite a few prayers in her honor; such belief would be insulting both to her and to her Divine Son. Greater effort should accompany our devotion to our heavenly Queen. No aid can come to us from on high, unless we co-operate with the

[5] Matt. v. 48. [6] 1 Thess. iv. 3. [7] Supra Salve.

graces we receive. He who receives one talent only, must make it fructify, and thus double the first loan he received from God, as his spiritual working capital. All men receive sufficient graces to arrive at their eternal destiny, but not all reach it, and the reason is that they do not exert themselves in corresponding to the help they receive from their heavenly Father. Neither will outward devotion to the Blessed Virgin obtain aid from heaven, except in so far as we co-operate with the help we have already received: for devotion to our Blessed Mother is neither true nor sincere, unless we strive to do the will of her Divine Son.

It is to supply the weakness of our pious desires and the inconstancy of our salutary efforts, that fervent devotion to our Blessed Mother bestows upon us the most efficacious and indispensable help. We have many means of salvation, which are also means of perfection, and the sincere devotion to the Blessed Virgin will procure for us the fervent desire to take hold of them and will obtain for us the disposition to profit by them. We have many enemies to overcome and our confidence in her patronage, added to our prayers and supplications, will furnish us with the undaunted courage to withstand their attacks and with the necessary arms to vanquish them; but we cannot expect that the inclinations of our sinful nature will cease to be an obstacle to our spiritual progress, nor that the wicked world will cease to allure us to destruction, by its pernicious errors and scandalous practices: our life is a warfare and death alone can bring us a lasting peace.

(c) The devotion to the Blessed Virgin conquers Satan.

Among the enemies of our advancement in spiritual life there is one, our archenemy, the devil, who is never entirely subdued, for instead of relenting and ceasing his perfidious attacks, after he has been repeatedly put to flight, he only becomes more embittered, more daring and desperate. He is especially enraged against the devout clients of Mary, for experience has taught him that they, who place their confidence in her, find a safe refuge in her protection. Therefore, he persistently attacks all those who tend to perfection and seek the patronage of the Mother of God, through their filial devotion to her and their zeal for her

honor. Even then Satan is not weary of the many defeats he has sustained, but redoubles his efforts to make pious souls fall into some sin of pride, vainglory, presumption, aversion, anger, disobedience, and even of impure thoughts. Of this we are warned by our Savior, who illustrates Satan's obstinacy, by returning to the house or soul, from which he has been expelled, even if he finds it necessary to take with him seven other spirits, more wicked than himself. [8]

As long as we live in this earthly exile, we are exposed to the ruses of "The devil who like a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour." [9] "We are in this life," says St. Gregory, "as on the road to reach our country, but the malignant spirits attack us like robbers on our passage." [10] There is always a danger lurking around, and often when we least expect it, and therefore we must seek aid from above, for without divine assistance we inevitably will succumb to the snares of the devil. The saints, those intrepid warriors, who fought many victorious battles with Satan, and whose exploits the Church places before our eyes as worthy of admiration and emulation, direct us to a sure refuge against all the temptations of the evil one, and it is none other than the new Eve, who, as the Lord foretold, would crush the head of the infernal serpent; for God said to the serpent that had seduced the first Eve, the mother of the human race: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman and thy seed and her seed; she shall crush thy head." [11] Ah! the consoling picture of the Immaculate Mother of God, who with her omnipotent heel crushes the head of the infernal dragon! Fear not, O ye heroic souls, O ye clients of Mary, fear not the powers of darkness, confide in your heavenly Mother, invoke her name with childish confidence and all the infernal spirits will flee at the sound of her name. "Mary," says St. Germain, "repels, at the sole invocation of her holy Name, all the attacks which the most wicked enemy directs against her faithful servants, whom she thus places in safety and preserves unharmed." [12]

The special power and prerogative of putting to flight

[8] Matt. xii. 43 *seq.* [9] 1 Peter v. 8. [10] Hom. 11 in Evang.
[11] Gen. iii. 15. [12] In Zona Virginis.

Lucifer and his rebel angels, seems, according to the saints, the exclusive privilege of Mary; because her Divine Son delegated to her His power over Satan, which He won through His victory over hell, achieved by His passion and death on the Cross. It is in the same sense we must understand the mind of the saints and Doctors of the Church, who proclaim that all graces from God come to us through the Mother of Jesus and therefore we call her the Help of Christians and the Refuge of sinners.

IV. Duties included in the sincere devotion to our Blessed Mother.

Piety, devotion and religion are three distinct and specific virtues. Religion regards the worship of God and the cult of angels and saints for His sake; devotion regards all their service in general, and piety, as understood by theologians, regards the honor and service of parents, of country and of God, considered as our beloved Father; but in our day the custom and usage tend to do away with the restrictive sense of the word piety; and religiousness, devotion and piety have become synonymous terms, although they cannot always be used indiscriminately; and their respective adjectives, religious, devout and pious, have also in consequence lost nearly all their original restrictive sense. The service of one's country is now called patriotism and piety and devotion are now commonly used to designate the honor, the confidence and all service rendered to God and to His saints. It is in this sense that we have employed the word "devotion" to designate the service we should render to the Blessed Virgin.

To have a proper concept of what the words *devotion* and *piety* mean, let us hear St. Thomas: "Devotion seems to be nothing else than a prompt will to give one's self up to what concerns the service of God." [13] Therefore, where there is question of piety and devotion to the Blessed Virgin, devotion is nothing else than a sincere desire and prompt will to undertake whatever may please her or her Divine Son. Now, since among the Ten Commandments some are mandatory, called also affirmative, and others are prohibitory or negative, so likewise we can serve our Blessed Mother,

[13] St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 82 a. 1.

either by doing what her divine Son commands or by avoiding what He forbids. All that offends our Redeemer necessarily wounds the heart of His beloved Mother, and therefore all sin greatly offends the Mother as well as her Son. The heart of Jesus and the heart of Mary are two distinct hearts: the first is the heart of a God and the other the heart of the most excellent of all possible creatures; but, in sentiment, the two are so united and so alike that they form as it were but one heart. Hence, if our Blessed Mother could still suffer and weep, what oceans of tears she would shed at the sight of so many venial sins, committed daily by Catholics, yea by those who call themselves her clients, and as for mortal sin, she would die of horror at the mere thought of it, because it is a grievous offense which caused the death of her Son on the Cross.

(a) Therefore the first thing our Blessed Mother requires of her devout sons and daughters, is a firm determination to avoid every deliberate sin, no matter how slight, how unimportant it may appear in their eyes. Nothing will rejoice the heart of Mary more, nothing can honor her more, than an efficacious desire and strong resolution to shun, with the help of her Son's graces and with the aid of her prayers, all sins, venial as well as mortal, and as far as possible all their near occasions.

Our devotion to the Blessed Mother should also comprise all necessary precautions and measures, by which we may prevent the sins of others, especially of those over whom we have any influence; and we should be willing to undertake any labor and to make any sacrifice to effectually uproot evil in our midst. We can easily imagine how it gratifies our Blessed Mother, when from the height of heaven, she beholds the effort of her clients, in reclaiming sinners from their evil ways, and we can as easily conceive, how our loving Mother will console the repenting sinner, who, in his last hour and in the sincerity of his heart, can repeat the pious prayer he so often lisped in his childhood: Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death; for, although she is horrified at the sight of the wicked, who persist in offending her Divine Son, her maternal heart compassionates the misery of the

sinners, who strive to extricate themselves from the meshes, which the devil has woven about them, for she can never forget that it is for sinners that her beloved Son bled and died. It is for sinners whom passion has blinded, or whose will has been weakened, by the contagion of a wicked world and the shameful vices of worldlings, that the Virgin Mother is called the "refuge of sinners," for, when they implore her aid, she may go with confidence to her Son, and confront Him with His own prayer in behalf of them who crucified Him, that merciful prayer, which He addressed to His Father from the Cross, saying: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

Although sinners, who are in the state of mortal sin, are unworthy of any grace or favor from on high, nevertheless God grants the sinner's prayer that proceeds for a good desire of his heart, not for justice sake, as the sinner cannot merit it, but through pure mercy.[14] With much more confidence of being heard can the sinner address his Father in heaven, if he has previously asked the assistance of the Mother of Jesus and his own Mother by adoption.

(b) The second thing which our Blessed Mother demands of her devoted servants, is a boundless confidence in her omnipotent intercession in all their temporal or spiritual necessities. We may address our prayers directly to the Father, or to the Son, or to the Holy Ghost, but if we address the First or Third Person, it is proper that we should implicitly or explicitly, profess that all favors come to us, through the merits of Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Redeemer, and if we directly present our supplications to the Son, our Savior, to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth,[15] we should, with the Church in her liturgical prayers, end ours with the words: "through the same Jesus Christ Our Lord," and the devout servants of Mary will add: and through the intercession of His Blessed Mother; or if they are prevented from using the words, they will at least raise their thoughts and hearts to their all-powerful advocate, for if Jesus, our Redeemer, is constituted our Mediator before the throne of God, Mary, our Mother, is our mediatrix with her omnipotent Son.

[14] St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 83 a. 16. [15] Matt. xix. 29.

The habitual inclination of honoring Mary by a childlike confidence in her protection, is a natural consequence of the truths laid down in this article. She is the Mother of the Redeemer and our Mother, and those who obey the command of the Redeemer: "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect," [16] and adopt it as the rule of their lives, cannot remain faithful to that rule, unless they have chosen Mary as their advocate before her Divine Son, and proved their boundless confidence in her by their thoughts, words and actions. Even sinners, we have seen, are not excluded from a reasonable confidence in her all-powerful protection, and therefore St. Bernard addresses this beautiful prayer to her, whom the Church calls the "refuge of sinners:" "Holy Mother of God, Thou hast no horror of the sinner, however polluted he may be; Thou despisest him not, when he sighs for Thee, and when he implores Thy assistance with a penitent heart, Thou drawest him from the abyss of despair. Compassionate Mother, Thou helpest him and Thou dost not abandon him until Thou hast finally reconciled him to his redoubtable Judge." [17] If sinners may have full confidence in Mary's assistance, what shall we say of the trust her faithful clients should place in her motherly love and affection, and in her all-powerful patronage? That bounteous Mother knows their dangers and the enemies of their salvation, and the best of mothers watches over them with a greater care than any earthly mother can bestow upon her beloved offspring; but propriety and duty demand that they should affectionately and confidently invoke her; for God is not wont to shower a continual flow of graces upon us mortals, without any merit on our part. When the first grace is given us, we must promptly correspond to and cooperate with it, to merit another or a greater. So it is with our Blessed Mother, who acts in perfect accord and union with her Divine Son. We should acknowledge her gifts and this together with an increased confidence in her powerful intervention, poured forth in an affectionate prayer for her assistance, will merit a greater abundance of spiritual favors.

Among the many graces that enable us to live a holy

[16] Matt. v. 48.

[17] In *Deprecat. ad Virg.*

life, for which we should implore our august Mother's aid, there is one all-important favor and that is, the gift of final perseverance. This grace we cannot merit by any good works, for as long as our soul is clothed with our mortal body, we are exposed to the concupiscence of the flesh, to the ruses of the evil one and to the evil maxims and practices of the wicked world, and grace is necessary to resist these enemies of our eternal welfare.[18] The special grace of perseverance to the end of our life, which cannot be merited, but may be obtained by our prayers and other good works, should be often the object of our most earnest supplications, addressed to the Mother of the Redeemer, who has merited for us all graces by His sufferings. Since we cannot know without a special revelation from God, that He has granted us the gift to persevere unto the end, and whereas moreover we are not absolutely certain that at this very moment we are in the state of grace, although we may rely upon God's goodness that our sins have been forgiven in the sacrament of Penance, which we received with the proper disposition, all men, even the most virtuous, should "With fear and trembling work out their salvation."[19] If we remain faithful to our duties and faithful to grace, and if besides we have a tender confidence in the assistance of our Blessed Mother, "He who has begun the good work, so will He perfect it,"[20] for He will give us the will to accomplish in all things His holy designs upon us, "until the day of Christ Jesus," that is until our death.[21]

(c) We owe our Blessed Mother a tender love that should surpass all other love, and should be secondary only to the love for her Son Jesus. This obligation springs from what we have said of the excellence, dignity and prerogatives of Mary. Is she not the most excellent being that ever came from the hand of God? Yea, God Himself could not create a being more worthy of our esteem and of all the affection our soul is capable of, for her holiness and merits must have corresponded to the dignity for which she was chosen. Therefore was she called "full of grace," that is, endowed with all the eminent virtues and sanctity the

[18] Co. of Trent, Sess. 6, ch. 13. [19] Phil. ii. 12. [20] *Loc. cit.*, i. 6.
[21] *Cfr.* St. Thomas, 1. 2. q. 109 a. 10.

Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost could bestow upon a sovereign Queen, who was to be the Mother of God. Call to your aid the memory of what you have seen or heard or read concerning what you esteem most, call to your help your imagination as well, and form in your mind the picture of what you esteemed the most perfect, the most wonderful woman, the most excellent of all created beauty, and the concept thus formed will be but a shadow of the excellence, the glories and the beauty of our heavenly Queen. If we accept the teaching of St. Thomas, who says that "The Blessed Virgin, for the sole reason that she is the Mother of God, has received from the Sovereign Good, God, a dignity in a manner infinite," [22] then also must her loveliness, her graces and perfection be in a manner infinite, for God must have bestowed upon her all the adornments, all the virtues and pre-eminent excellence befitting her quasi-infinite dignity. We may then with the Church apply to our celestial Queen the words of the Canticle: "Thou art all-fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee." [23]

The Blessed Virgin is also our Mother, and hence we have another reason to love her most tenderly. How the sweet name of mother thrills our hearts! What entrancing memories it evokes! Who can without deep emotions think of the motherly caresses he received in his youth? Far sweeter and tenderer still are the affections of our heavenly Mother towards her children upon earth: for she understands their miseries, and she knows the combats they have to sustain against the enemies of their eternal welfare; she is aware of their helplessness if they are left to themselves, and therefore in her goodness of heart—of which she gave proof by willingly offering her Son as a sacrifice for the sins of men—she is the more compassionate and the readier to fly to our aid, the greater the sacrifice she made for our sake. Another proof of Mary's deep concern in our welfare, and of her motherly compassion, lies in the scriptural proof, that all those who belong to the Church established by her Son upon earth, belong to the mystical body of Christ, who is also its Head. According to the doctrine of St. Paul, the Church is the body of Christ and

[22] P. 1 q. 25 a. 6 to 4. [23] Cant. iv. 7.

all Christians in the state of grace are members of His body and live by His life.[24] Therefore, as Mary the Mother of Christ and we are members of His body, Mary becomes our spiritual Mother. It is thus with reason that pious commentators of the gospels see in the words of Christ addressed from the Cross to her and St. John, the verification of this spiritual motherhood, which she exercises over the members of the Church on earth, if not over the entire communion of saints; for when the Redeemer said to His Mother: "Woman, behold thy son" and to the beloved disciple: "Behold thy Mother,"[25] all those that live the life of Christ, and are thus closely united to Him through sanctifying grace, are comprised in the word "son," for through grace we become children of God, live the life of the Savior, and become His co-heirs of eternal happiness. Neither are sinners entirely excluded—although they are as it were dead members—inasmuch as through Mary's intercession and by their corresponding to God's graces, they may also through repentance, become members of the mystical body of Christ and children of His Mother. Thus is the spiritual fecundity of the Virgin Mother established, and thus the whole world may share in her motherly affections. With what tender love will the best of mothers not watch over the welfare of her adopted children, in obedience to the last will of her dying Son? With what fervor will she not beg her Divine Son for abundant graces for every Christian who carries in his heart and carries out in practice, the last will and testament of the dying Redeemer: "Behold thy Mother." Justice often demands that punishment be meted out to the unrepenting sinner, but Mary, the Mother of Mercy, frequently obtains through her intercession, that Divine Justice be softened and that Mercy and Justice be reconciled in the kiss of peace.

V. Practices suggested to maintain and increase devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

1. To meditate frequently on Mary's dignity and prerogatives with a view of stimulating our confidence in, as well as our love and affection for, our heavenly Queen. We

[24] 1 Cor. vi. 10, 19; Eph. v. 30. [25] John xix. 26, 27.

should likewise rejoice with a pious complacency, in her excellence and pre-eminence over all God's rational creatures in heaven or on earth, in her Divine Maternity, in her Immaculate Conception, in her spotless virginity, and in her maternal rights over all her children upon earth, in all the graces bestowed by God upon her and in all her virtues: her humility, meekness, obedience, and in all her merits through her love of poverty, sufferings and sacrifices in cooperation with all God's designs upon her.

2. To strive to imitate her virtues, for we thereby render ourselves more agreeable to God, and more worthy of her protection.

3. Every Christian should choose Mary as his Mother, his advocate and patroness with her Divine Son. It is advisable to choose one of her great feasts for the purpose and prepare for it by a novena or a triduum of prayers. To make the preparation more meritorious, it would be well to add to prayers and meditations some mortification, such as fasting on one or more days.

4. To recite daily the Office of the Blessed Virgin or the Holy Rosary instead, or at least one decade of it. Whatever devotion one has undertaken, he should remain faithful to it during life.

5. To strive, as far as we can, to excite in the hearts of others a true devotion to the Mother of God.

6. To celebrate with great fervor the feasts of the Blessed Virgin, by assisting at the devotions in her honor, by hearing Mass and by going to Holy Communion.

7. To visit as often as we can some sanctuary of the Blessed Mother, if there be one in the neighborhood, or some shrine or altar dedicated to her.

8. To have in the house at least one picture or statue of the Virgin Mother, and to take delight in gathering flowers to place before it.

9. We cannot recommend too highly to young men and women their affiliation with some confraternity of the Blessed Virgin.

10. Clients of Mary will find in their devotion to their adopted Mother, a multitude of ways to prove their esteem, reverence and love for her, such as to honor her by special

pious exercises during the months of May and October: the first is properly called Mary's month and the latter is now known as the month of the Holy Rosary. The frequent use of ejaculatory prayers to give vent to sentiments of love, esteem, admiration and piety for our celestial Queen, and the habit of fostering a childlike confidence in her powerful patronage, especially in temptations, should be practiced among all classes of people, young and old, for they stimulate devotion and call to our aid the noblest sentiments of the heart.

PART II

OBSTACLES TO CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

Introduction

We have now considered and explained the means indispensable to perfection. We enter now upon the study of the obstacles to spiritual progress. The enemies of our salvation, as we learn from many passages of Holy Scripture, are three: the world, the devil and the flesh. By the word flesh must be understood, not only the body, but man composed of body and soul. Now, man is his own enemy, because his nature was vitiated by the sin of our first parents, and thus the evil inclinations of the soul as well as those of the body are a constant danger to his salvation.

The world is a less serious impediment to our spiritual advancement, because we can avoid the world and the dangers thereof, or if we are obliged to live in the world, we can despise its riches, its glories and its pleasures, which it offers as inducements to abandon the narrow path that leads to union with God. Still who cannot see but that for all—and mainly for those who cannot sever all relations with the wicked world—the maxims in vogue among worldlings enslave the imprudent, and as they are diametrically opposed to the teachings of the Gospel, worldly allurements are a constant menace to spiritual progress, yea to salvation itself, especially so, because the devil, in order to deceive the unwary, is not slow to avail himself of the false joys, vainglory and insatiable love for riches, reigning supreme in modern society, in order to bring ruin on our soul.

The devil is another enemy of our salvation. As he can do us less harm by attacking us directly and openly, that is through overt suggestions of evil deeds, he employs with the virtuous and God-fearing persons the passions of the soul,

the concupiscence of the flesh and the allurements of the world as his allies, by placing before their mind illusive phantoms or representations, which flatter the evil inclinations of the soul or of the body, and thus he becomes a formidable enemy to our spiritual welfare.

We will begin with the evil inclinations resulting from unrestrained concupiscence or sensual appetites, for they debauch, unless they are withstood, the two noblest faculties of the soul, intellect and will, by obscuring the former and by weakening the latter, and thus they make the soul an easy prey to sensuality. They also easily ally themselves with the passions of the soul to further undo man's reasoning faculties and thus both sensual and intellectual appetites rebel against reason and reason against God. Although the sensual appetite or concupiscence of the flesh are sometimes called passions, we will in this Manual, in order to avoid confusion in the terms, apply the word passion mainly to the intellectual appetites.

ARTICLE I

The Five Senses as Obstacles to Perfection

Among the obstacles to salvation are the five senses, to wit: the sight, the hearing, the smell, the taste and the touch. It is evident that the five senses, given us by God with our nature, cannot be evil in themselves; but, as they are blind faculties, they must be restricted to the use, for which the Creator has intended them. Hence the use of the senses is determined by sound reason, the natural law and the positive law of God. Their use is still further circumscribed for those who strive for perfection, for, although licit within the bounds of reason and of human and divine law, it may become detrimental to our speedy and certain progress in spiritual life. Man's sad experience warns him that the sensual appetites represent to the intellect many things as good and desirable, which in reality are evil; and unless they are quickly resisted, they become a real danger, for owing to their violent impulse they obscure the intellect and in some manner they move the will to execute their wicked desire. Behold the sad consequence of Adam's rebellion against his God.

Motions due to the sensual appetites, if they are antecedent to the consent of the will, are indifferent: they may by that consent become morally good or bad. Thus we may listen to entrancing music and therein find an occasion of glorifying God, and this is evidently good or virtuous; but the same act becomes indifferent if it be resorted to as a pastime, and it is evil, when it excites carnal desires or when a too ardent love of music causes neglect of duty. Nevertheless we are taught by sad experience that the unrestained sensual appetites weaken the will by obscuring the intellect, which is no longer able to promptly and clearly discern the evil contained in what the senses propose to the mind as good or indifferent, and we have reason to conclude that

the sensual appetites are cause of more serious downfalls leading to final perdition, than all the other enemies of our salvation; because it is through them that the devil tempts us in the hope of a surer victory, and it is through them that the world and worldlings allure us away from virtue to follow the broad path of vice and shame. Thus whatever is delightful to the hearing, beautiful to the sight, agreeable to the smell, sweet to the taste, and soft to the touch, may be an occasion of sin, if not of the most heinous crimes; and therefore our senses must be carefully guarded and their appetites kept under restraint; for if they do not always engender vices grievously offensive to God, the least unnecessary indulgence towards them is detrimental to virtue and to the spirit of mortification, which belong to the state of those who wish, in all things, to conform themselves to the holy will of God, in which the highest degree of perfection consists. Uncontrolled sensual appetites will thus forever remain serious obstacles to the perfection of our souls.

CHAPTER I

The Sense of Touch

Obstacles to Perfection Caused by the Sense of Touch—The Sensual Appetites Explained: Their Danger—The Sense of Touch the Most Dangerous of All—Remedies Against Lust: (a) Vigilance; (b) Penances and Mortifications; (c) Moderation in Our Mortifications; (d) Advices and Practical Rules.

I. The sense of touch is of all the senses undoubtedly the most dangerous and that for many reasons. It is the only sense spread over the whole body, whilst all the other senses reside in the head, and only in or near their proper organs, and what is more to be dreaded, is that the purely animal sense principally covets carnal pleasures, which make man similar to the brute and inflict upon him the spiritual death of the soul.

The fatal consequences of the vice of lust, which mainly belongs to the sense of touch and follows from it as an effect from its cause, come from the ravages it entails upon the two faculties of the soul, which principally distinguish man from the brute: his intellect and will. All the inordinate appetites of man, whether intellectual or sensual, have an evil influence on those two faculties, for all vices, whatever be their source, confuse the understanding and enfeeble the will of man, and this explains why in spite of our efforts, we are so often guilty of venial sins and imperfections; for we would not so easily offend God, if our reason were left unimpaired. When we now come to consider the vice of lust, we have before us a vice, which so completely impairs man's reason, because of the violence of its appetite, that those addicted to it count as nothing all that they esteem most: position, honors, riches, friendship, family ties, their future well-being and their temporal and eternal happiness are thrust aside to satisfy the cravings of their animal nature.

The fearful consequences of the vice of lust cannot be overestimated or exaggerated, for man given up to the un-

lawful desires of the flesh is prone to all excesses and capable of the most frightful and shameful crimes, for nothing is sacred in his eyes. We do not deem it necessary to mention the different species of the sin against the holy virtue of purity or chastity, for they should not so much as be named among us, nor even thought of; but to be inspired with the greatest dread against the vice of lust, we quote St. Paul, who says, that those who do the things that are not proper, are "Filled with all iniquity, malice, fornication, avarice, wickedness; full of envy, murder, contentions, deceit, malignity; whisperers, detractors, hateful to God, contumelious, proud, haughty; inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, foolish, dissolute; without affection, without fidelity, without mercy."[1] St. Peter gives in other words a like frightful picture of the vice of lust and shows to what degradation one arrives if he becomes the slave of impure desires. St. Thomas, after explaining that the vice of lust thwarts the proper operations of man's superior faculties, intellect and will, by the vehemence of the concupiscible appetite, names the following as its daughters: *blindness of mind;* for the intellect becomes obscured so that the mind is easily deceived with regard to what is good or evil, by taking the appearance for the reality; *precipitation,* which prevents the suitable exercise of judgment or the taking counsel with one's self concerning the end and consequences of an act; false *judgment,* through carelessness due to precipitation; *inconstancy* or want of determination to execute what has been decided; *self-love,* by which the satisfaction of illicit pleasures is preferred to God's holy will and as a consequence, *hatred of God,* who forbids inordinate lustful desires and actions; *love of the present life,* because of the pleasures which libertines covet and dread to lose; *despair* of ever attaining eternal happiness; and as a consequence an irresistible *fear and horror of death and of God's judgment.*[2]

All this might seem exaggerated, if the history of the past, as well as contemporaneous history, did not furnish us thousand of examples attesting the ravages of carnal voluptuousness; we need only remember the deluge, the fate of

[1] Rom. i. 27 *seq.* [2] *Cfr.* St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 153 a. 5.

Sodom, Gomorra and of the neighboring cities, the history of the chaste Susanna, David's adultery, the punishment he endured and the penances he imposed upon himself during his whole life, even after his sin had been forgiven; but what more than anything else should make us flee from the remotest occasion of that sin, is the example of Solomon. Until he had introduced into his palace women of foreign nations, he was the wisest of all men, an example of prudence, of constancy in virtue and of devotion to the honor and glory of God; but his love for those women corrupted his heart and we see that thereafter this man so renowned for his wisdom and piety, as well as for his wealth and knowledge of all things under the sun, stooped so low as to build temples of false worship to please his idolatrous concubines. With these examples before us, how imperious is the duty imposed upon us to keep a constant watch over the sense of touch, in which the most dangerous of all sensual appetites resides. The least indulgence is often fatal in its consequences: it is a fire that is never completely extinguished, and the least breath of contagion makes it blaze up, and once under way, how difficult to prevent an extensive conflagration! St. Gregory makes the following remark on the vice of lust: "The holy man Job defining what the crime of lust is, said, 'It is a fire that devours to destruction, because the guilt of that vice sullies, infects, burns and destroys. Moreover, whatever good works there may be in man, unless the sin of voluptuousness be extirpated, they are all annihilated by the enormity of the crime. Job adds: that sin destroys all the germs of virtue."[3] From this we understand that one may have arrived at the greatest sanctity through the practice of the most sublime and heroic virtues, nothing remains of all his labors, of his watchings, of his mortifications, of the graces he received through the sacraments, of his most ardent prayers and of his most tender devotions, if he is ever carried away by the evil inclination of the dreadful vice of lust; because like a fire it burns away the life of grace to nothingness, and leaves not even a germ of spiritual life by which a new spiritual life could be inaugurated.

[3] L. 21, Moral., c. 9.

II. With what circumspection must we not act towards the sense of touch, which like a mortal enemy may rob us of all the fruit of a pious and devout life spent in the service of God! Therefore let us carefully examine what weapons are at our disposal, not to kill the traitor lurking within us and forming a part, as it were, of our very nature, for that is impossible; but to keep him under control and enchain him, and prevent him from hurting us or tarnishing the virtues we have already acquired.

Remedies against lust.

A. The sense of touch is mainly instrumental in stimulating the concupiscence of the flesh, and therefore we must scrupulously watch our movements and allow ourselves no freedom that may stir up the slumbering fire, lest it may burst into a wild conflagration. Hence we are warned not to touch anyone and especially persons of another sex, not even under pretext of custom, friendship or politeness, except it be a simple hand-shaking in case it would be considered rude to refuse the proffered hand of a stranger, but under no consideration should we allow another person to hold our hands, even if it be only for a moment. All familiarities which are not demanded by good breeding and custom—although not evil in themselves unless practiced with an evil intention or in an unbecoming manner—may easily stir up in one or the other the slumbering fire and excite inordinate motions in a sense so susceptible and impressionable. "Young man," says St. Giles, "approach rather an ardent fire than a young girl, for if the fire reaches you, the pain will make you draw away; but if the seductive language of a woman sets you on fire, no, you will not move away so quickly." [4] Men and women when near each other are like fire and straw which burn together at the least contact, and if they touch, they will both most assuredly burn with the ardent fire of an impure love. We should likewise be circumspect with regard to ourselves although it is less dangerous to touch our own flesh that that of another, because of the care our body requires from us, for a good intention in the performance of a duty, is in itself meritorious; nevertheless, prudence demands that we should not touch

[4] Orat. 2 *adv. vitia.*

ourselves more than is necessary. This itself will make us more circumspect with regard to others. Our own flesh is our enemy and as the sense of touch is, as we said, spread over the wholy body, by denying it any unnecessary freedom, we acquire the habit of constantly controlling all its movements.

St. Basil referring to the evil consequences of the sense of touch, says: "The love of purity should make us watch, as attentively as possible, over the sense of touch; because it is the most pernicious and most seductive of all senses, for it drags the others with itself into its disorders." [5] Although we cannot deny the correctness of this statement that the touch drags into its disorders all the other senses, nevertheless the hearing, the sight, the smell and the taste, although they may become the allies of the touch to excite carnal desires, are cause of other evils as well, and therefore each one deserves a special chapter in this manual; but we will first speak of another remedy against the vice of lust, one that attacks it, if not directly, at least most effectively.

B. As every malady has its remedy, so to every vice corresponds a virtue that counteracts it. "Our celestial Physician," says St. Gregory, "uses coercive means against every particular vice: for as in medicine heat is tempered by cold and cold by heat, thus the Lord opposes to sins remedies which are contrary to them." [6] In accordance with that doctrine, we must first diagnose or fully understand the degrading vice of carnal concupiscence to apply proper remedies for its cure. Its apparent symptoms are, the sinful sensations principally produced by the most dangerous of all the senses, the sense of touch; and unless the latter be controlled, man becomes subject to the dreadful malady, lechery, which depraves the body and kills the soul and thus vitiates his whole being. Constant and watchful care of the sense of touch as a remedy for its repression or for its cure, has already been given, but the sensation which the filthy appetite covets may also be produced by evil thoughts and desires, by the wicked suggestions of Satan, by impure conversations, songs and sights, by obscene reading,

[5] L. *de Vera Virgin.* [6] Hom. 32 in *Evang.*

by the pernicious examples of others, etc. Thus Satan and the world, and all the senses are instrumental in exciting the impure inclinations of a corrupt nature, and libertines find a particular delight in speaking of, and listening to, and beholding what is impure; yea, they seem even to smell and taste the filthy sensation of carnal lust, like pigs who love the wallow in the nauseating, foul-smelling mire.

We must then search for the root of the evil and eradicate it as completely as possible, and therefore it behooves us to examine the source of its life and its vitality. We have called carnal concupiscence a fire and for good reasons. If it be a fire it needs to be fed or it will die out. In this we see the hope of reaching a solution and of finding a remedy for the mortal malady: the fire of concupiscence feeds on the vicious pleasurable sensations it covets, and all such sensations add much fuel to the flame; but it feeds with more avidity on voluptuousness itself. All that the flesh desires with eagerness, ease, comfort, effeminacy, softness, hilarity, delightful and soft music, alluring scenes, lewd or intimate conversations with persons of another sex, sensational reading, obscene pictures and imaginations, exquisitely prepared meals, delicious wines and other beverages, but above all the impure sensations themselves are the food on which voluptuousness thrives: they are like fagots of dry wood thrown on a burning fire. As a preventive remedy it is incumbent upon everyone to remove all those excitants and stimulants of the passion of lust, but more than this it is indispensable to cure its vicious inclinations and its inordinate motions. We should by coercive means calculated to weaken the body, impose upon it painful tasks to mortify it, and employ for that end and purpose what the flesh most dreads and abhors, such as fastings, labors, flagellations and disciplines, cilices, hair-shirts and similar penances. By doing so we imitate the wise and prudent physician, who, having under his care a patient suffering of a burning fever, tries to lower his temperature and thus opposes cold to heat.

The wisdom of constraining the body to submit to pain, is based upon the doctrine of the Church, that through original sin, the appetites of the body are not any longer subject to reason, for the Apostle says that: "The flesh covets

against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh for they are opposed to each other."[7] We have also shown that the sensual appetites obscure man's intellect and weaken his will. In order to restore in some manner the proper relation between the soul and the body, and to preserve for the former perfect freedom of action, as well as to maintain her dominion over the latter, the soul is forced and morally bound to subdue the flesh and all its appetites, and particularly its carnal concupiscence. The body must be treated as an obstinate and rebellious slave, for the soul must either rule as mistress or become the slave of the body: there is no other alternative. Hence the imperative duty of the soul to subdue the flesh and to bring it under subjection.

St. Paul teaches the doctrine just enunciated by word and example: "I chastise my body," he says, "and bring it under subjection; lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I should myself become a castaway," a reprobate.[8] Here we have a holy Apostle, a foremost leader of the soldiers of the Cross, who goes forth to battle to win victories for Christ, and in spite of all his sacrifices, he fears lest he lose his soul, unless he mortifies himself by chastisements, so that his soul may dominate the body. What else did the amiable Savior teach when He places self-denial as a duty upon all those who wish to follow in His footsteps. "If any man will follow Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me."[9] Self-denial is the refraining from gratifying one's own appetites, and if, besides, the cross be taken up, that is, if one seeks humiliation, privation and sufferings, either self-imposed or joyfully accepted, when laid upon him by the hand of God or of man, then is he able to follow the Shepherd of souls and then only has he entered upon the road to perfection. St. Augustine points to St. Paul as an example which all are bound to follow, if they desire to advance in virtue. "See," he says, "the Apostle St. Paul dash into the road of perfection by taming and governing his rebellious steed. 'I chastise my body,' he says, 'I reduce it to servitude, by hunger, by thirst and by fasts.' You then who desire to advance, subdue also your flesh and march on; you progress when

[7] Rom. vii. 23. [8] 1 Cor. ix. 27. [9] Mark viii. 27.

you subdue, for it is not by steps that you approach God, but by holy affections." [10] "It is necessary to mortify one's senses," says St. Francis of Sales, "that reason may dominate the sensual appetites." All the saints have followed the teachings of Our Lord as well as His example by an austere and mortified life. There is not one of them who has not joined mortification to prayer, and many of them deemed that prayer, without it, is like a body without a soul, dead. There is not one who has not lovingly accepted the trials of life and all the opportunities of subduing his passions and the concupiscence of the flesh by suitable mortifications. It behooves those who strive for perfection to follow in their footsteps and take to heart the lessons taught them by the examples of thousands of holy men and women.

C. Prudence in the exercise of mortification.

Corporal mortifications, we have seen, subdue the sensual appetites and in particular the concupiscence of the flesh, the vice so much to be dreaded and the vice which ordinarily cannot be extirpated without recourse to mortification, for "This kind (of devil) is not cast out but by prayer and fasting." [11] Humble and confident prayer united to moderate fasts are the arms which a Christian must employ to expel the devil of voluptuousness. True peace and a lasting peace is only gained by numerous victories over the demon of lust. Mortifications are likewise necessary to blot out the punishments due to our past sins, for as long as the satisfaction is not full and complete, some guilt remains in the soul, as the Angelic Doctor teaches, and guilt, be it ever so slight, is an obstacle to the abundant graces we need, to practice the virtues which lead to perfection.

1. Among the mortifications to be recommended, fasts deserve the first place, because by weakening the body we diminish the fire of concupiscence. Of fasts we speak at length in the next chapter as a remedy against the evil consequence of an unbridled appetite.

Cilices are of two kinds: those of iron and those made of hair-cloth, called also hair-shirts. We read in the Book of Judith, that "She wore hair-cloth upon her loins, and

[10] *Tract. de diversis capit.*, c. 3. [11] Matt. xvii. 20.

fasted all the days of her life, except on Sabbaths and new moons and on the feasts of the house of Israel." [12] David, the model of penitents, used as a defense against his enemies, hair-cloth, fasts and prayer: "When they were troublesome to me, I was clothed with hair-cloth. I humbled my soul with fastings and my prayer shall be turned into my bosom." [13] Hair-shirts or sackcloth garments have from time immemorial been employed by true penitents to satisfy for their sins and to resist the inordinate intellectual and sensual motions of their sinful nature. Numberless saints and the early anchorites of the Egyptian deserts made a common use of them; and sackcloth, worn around the loins and ashes strewn over the head, were signs of mourning and penitence among the Jews in all public calamities." [14]

2. Watchings and public vigils, observed in the primitive Church on the eve and night of great feasts, are no longer in use, probably because the enemies of the Christian name found in them specious arguments to recriminate against the practice, although their pious observance was warmly defended by St. Jerome; but private watches or the keeping from sleep to give one's self up to prayer, are still in use in many communities of men and women and especially in those of the contemplative orders. That this practice so pious and edifying is very agreeable to God, cannot be controverted. Our Lord passed entire nights in prayer. [15] David rose at midnight to praise his Lord. [16] The practice is also approved as salutary by the conduct of the apostles and of the early Christians, [17] and by the teachings and example of St. Paul. [18] If there are many religious orders, who, on account of their arduous occupations during the day, do not observe the pious practice, the truth still remains that people in general devote too much time to sleep, for people in good health and in their full manhood, seven hours of sleep is more than sufficient, and every moment over and above given up to rest is more weakening than strengthening. To sleep until one is tired of lying in bed, is conducive to sloth and to relaxation of man's energies whether of

[12] Judith viii. 6.
[13] Ps. xxxiv. 13, 14.
[14] 2 Kings iii. 31; Esther iv. 1.
[15] Luke vi. 10.
[16] Ps. cxviii. 62.
[17] Acts xii. 12, 16, 15.
[18] 2 Cor. vi. 11, 27.

the soul or of the body. If we condemn excesses in eating and drinking, why not the transgression of the proper limits of sleep?

There are, it is true, many other means of mortification, such as to suffer heat and cold and any other inclemency of the weather, but that is no reason to neglect the means of mortification, exemplified in the life of Our Blessed Lord, of the apostles and of the early Christians, and practiced by numberless saints.

One of the means of not giving more time to sleep than is necessary is to choose for one's night-rest a hard couch, but not so hard as to drive away sleep altogether. In religious communities the early morning bell calls the inmates to prayer and meditation, and for them the sound of the bell is the voice of God, which should be promptly and joyfully obeyed; but for people of the world, if they have chosen a rule of life—which we have earnestly recommended—a hard couch together with their perfect reliance on their guardian angel, in whose embrace they betook themselves to rest, will be an effective help to awake at the hour appointed for rising, laid down in their order of daily exercises.

3. Flagellations and disciplines applied with moderation are other means of chastising the body and bringing it under subjection. We are all acquainted with the cord of St. Francis and its purpose, which consists not so much in wearing it around the waist as a girdle—for that is only a sign that the wearer is imbued with the spirit of mortification—but in its use for frequent flagellations moderately painful. Flagellations of such severity as to cause the blood to flow, should be discouraged or even condemned, unless there be reasonable certainty that God wills to conduct those who resort to them to a high degree of sanctity by extraordinary means; but the discipline given with a knotted cord is sufficiently painful for a suitable mortification and is nowise injurious to the health and strength of the body.

D. Moderation in the use of mortification.

Holy Scripture and the teachings of the Church, of the Fathers and of the masters of spiritual life impose upon us the necessity of mortifying the body to maintain the dominion of reason over the blind concupiscence of the flesh;

nevertheless there is a limit to the macerations of the flesh, beyond which they become vicious and sinful. Prudence and moderation are required even in the virtue of penance, so that we may not fall into disorders which the law of God forbids or which are opposed to other virtues we are bound to practice.

Two simple rules will help us to draw the line beyond which mortification becomes unlawful, and the first is that we must not injure our health and the second, that mortifications should not hinder the performance of the duties and virtues of our state of life.

1. The flesh is an obstacle to our salvation in the sense that its natural inclinations are opposed to the dictates of our conscience, and therefore to sound reason; for reason enlightened by faith teaches us that we must shun what conscience forbids and do what it commands: a good conscience is but an intimate and clear knowledge of God's holy will. In that sense the flesh is an enemy we have reason to fear, but as our being is composed of a material body and a spiritual soul, and, although the soul is the mistress of the body, nevertheless the soul is in constant need of its mortal companion, to treat it with rigor and to hate it like an implacable enemy is from the part of the soul cruelty, if not insanity. "For no one," says the Apostle, "ever hateth his own flesh, but nourisheth it and cherisheth it." [19] As an upright father is not moved by hatred, but by love when he chastises his wayward son, so likewise the true Christian mortifies his flesh not through hatred, but through the desire of wresting it from the unquenchable fire, to which its uncontrolled appetites would condemn both body and soul. Therefore the virtue of moderation requires that, by mortifying the body, we refrain from injuring it permanently, from maiming it or from debilitating it to the extent that its service for good works be lost to the soul. "We must practice patience," says St. Basil, "being careful of measuring it according to the strength of the body," [20] or as St. Gregory has it: "The mortification of the flesh must be practiced with a view of destroying the vices of the flesh but not the flesh itself." [21] St. Thomas likewise teaches that

[19] Eph. v. 59. [20] Const., c. 5. [21] Morl L. 30, c. 14.

mortification to be acceptable to God must be discreet: "Corporal mortification," he says, "is only agreeable to God in so far as it is an act of virtue; and this happens when it is exercised with sufficient discretion to repress concupiscence without overwhelming one's nature. Therefore the Apostle after saying: "I beseech you, brethren, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, wholly pleasing to God," [22] added "your reasonable service." [23]

2. The Angelic Doctor in the passage just quoted—although he has principally in view indiscreet vows—remarks that men are easily deceived with regard to things that concern their personal conduct, and therefore a second rule, if properly observed, will help us to judge of the propriety and lawfulness of our self-imposed macerations of the flesh: the rule is that mortification should not prevent the performance of our daily duties. If through excessive watches one be overcome by sleep during his occupations, he must devote more time to night-rest; if his macerations debilitate him so that he cannot perform the duties of his office, he is morally bound to remove the cause. This is clearly taught by the masters of spiritual life, and is accepted as sound morality by all theologians: "When by imposing upon one's self fasts, watches, or other penances of that kind," says the Angelic Doctor, "one is so much weakened that he can no longer fulfill his duty of preacher, teacher, chanter—and this applies to other functions—he certainly sins, in the same manner as he who, through fasting, renders himself incapable of fulfilling the duty of husband. Therefore St. Jerome has said, 'He who extenuates his body by an excessive abstinence from food or by a long privation of sleep, offers to God a stolen holocaust'." [24]. St. Thomas adds that St. Bernard admitted that he had sinned by weakening too much his body by fasts and watchings; and to what did St. Bernard attribute his mistake and the excesses he subsequently deplored? To the ruses of the devil. "How often," says the same saint, "did Satan not suggest to me to rise before the others in order to be able to laugh at me when I fell asleep during the chanting of my brethren; to prolong my fasts by which I rendered myself too weak to comply

[22] Rom. xii. 1. [23] 2. 2. q. 88 a. 2 to 3. [24] Quod. lib. 5 a. 15.

with the labor concerning God's glory; to apply myself to manual labor more than necessary, and thus by exhausting my strength, to render myself incapable of observing the other duties of the rule." [25] The experience of St. Bernard is like that of many others. How many directors of souls, how many ordinary confessors even, have not had to deplore sadder cases of indiscreet mortification than the mistakes of St. Bernard? And that especially happened among young men and women, who after a fervent retreat or mission, or after reading the life of some mortified saint, have thought themselves called to imitate their extraordinary penance; and who after ruining their health, have abandoned all mortification, have become carnal and voluptuous, and rushed without scruple amidst the shameful pleasures and vices of that concupiscence they imprudently determined to quench! Mortifications are indispensable to subdue the passions of the soul and the evil inclinations of the flesh, and until we have vanquished both those enemies, there can be no hope of advancment toward perfection; and on the other hand we have just learned how dangerous it is to rely upon our own judgment, no matter how good our intention may be. Hence we need light from above and advice from wise men on the matter of such great importance, and therefore a third rule becomes necessary to guide us, to safeguard from danger the observance of the two first, and to assure us that our penances and mortifications are free from vain-glory, the ruses of the devil and the rashness of our self-will.

3. The third rule is this: no one should attempt other mortifications than the ones imposed by the Church, except with the approval of his director or confessor. As practically the whole world, even the Christian world, outside of religious communities, dreads and abhors all kinds of mortifications, confessors can seldom impose them upon their penitents and then only in extreme cases, when bodily chastisements are the only remedy against relapse into grievous sins; and nevertheless the absolute necessity of penance is taught by Our Lord: "Except you do penance," He says, "you shall all perish," [26] and unless we "chastise the body

[25] In Cant., Serm. 33. [26] Luke xiii. 5.

and bring it under subjection," [27] the flesh will revolt against the spirit and like an indomitable steed will plunge with its rider into the abyss of perdition. What is a sincere Christian to do, when he is confronted with the absolute necessity of mortifications and on the other hand with the danger of falling into Satan's snares but to consult those whom God has appointed our guides in all that regards our eternal welfare? None are more capable than confessors or directors to point out the most fruitful mortifications for each particular person, and therefore God-fearing penitents should earnestly beg their confessor to prescribe the proper mortifications or if they have a preference, submit their choice to his judgment. "If any one," says Cassian, "wishes to observe more rigorously the fast, watches and other exercises, let him expose his reason to those who are charged with the general discipline and let him abide by what they shall have decided," that is, whatever their decision may be, let him faithfully observe it in all particulars. [28]

If any one should object that there are fervent penitents who feel themselves irresistibly drawn, as if constrained, to have recourse to severe macerations of the flesh, and that God alone can be the author of the urgent impulse, we should still hold that they may be deceived, and it is safer to adhere to the rule, and if they persist in their unwillingness to disclose their intention of adopting rigorous penances, on the plea that their confessor does not favor bodily chastisements, he will easily detect in their obstinacy the work of the evil one, for even in the supposition that the inspiration comes from God and that the confessor wrongly refuses the penitent's request, has our heavenly Father not a thousand ways to open the confessor's eye and thus impose compliance with the penitent's earnest desire? We have many examples in the lives of saints, illustrating the providential ways of God in leading pious souls to carry out His designs. St. Teresa was often thwarted in the execution of her plans, which were inspired by God. She always obeyed her confessor and the stand she took was approved by Our Lord; but Providence in due time brought the confessor himself to aid in the execution of the plans he had at first opposed.

[27] 1 Cor. ix. 27. [28] Coll. ii., c. 10.

We have in Holy Scripture [29] another case illustrating God's wonderful providence in the execution of His designs. The Lord called the youthful Samuel—"who was ministering to Him before Heli"—four times in succession. Samuel thinking each time that Heli had called him, went to him, and learning his mistake, he returned each time to his couch; but after the third call, Heli understood that the call came from God and he instructed the child to answer the next call by saying: "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." The sequel shows that the Lord had called the pious youth to manifest to him the dire punishments in store for the high-priest and for his wicked sons. What God has done to convince Heli and the directors of St. Teresa, will He fail to do it with regard to pious confessors, who might prudently have refused to their penitents the sacrifices and mortifications, which He desires them to undertake? If penitents be called to undertake extraordinary penances, they should imitate the youth Samuel and St. Teresa, and if they are refused the first time, they should repeat their request, and there is no priest who will not recognize the will of God in the perseverance of humble and obedient penitents. Besides the latter are at liberty to change confessors, if they are certain that their pious inspirations are unduly opposed and thwarted.

These remarks apply only to painful macerations or penances dangerous to the health, such as frequent and stricts fasts and especially fasts on bread and water, the sleeping on the bare ground, the wearing of cilices of iron and of hair-cloth, bloody flagellations, abrasions or incisions of the flesh with instruments or anything else which may endanger one's health or materially weaken one's strength; but they do not apply to moderate discipline, frugality in eating, the abstaining from some unnecessary food and drink, such as sweetmeats, desserts, or intoxicating drinks, the sleeping on hard beds but with sufficient bed-clothes to ward off cold, and a thousand other mortifications that instead of injuring the health are conducive to its preservation; but even in these, for the sake of humility and to guard against Satan's wiles and ruses, young people should seek

[29] 1 Kings iii. 4 *seq.*

the approbation of their confessor or director, for they are not yet able to distinguish between true and false mortification, and to them is especially applicable what St. Basil teaches: "It is better and more useful to fortify the body than to weaken it; better to make it more capable of doing good than to extenuate it by excessive austerities." [30]

[30] Constit., c. 5.

CHAPTER II

The Sense of Taste a Second Obstacle to Perfection

The Taste is Not Necessarily Evil—The Vices of Taste Are Gluttony and Intemperance—Abstemiousness and Temperance—Effect of Intemperance in Eating and Drinking—Means to Combat Intemperance and Gluttony—Fast and Rules for it—Remarks.

The unguarded sense of touch or feeling leads, as we have seen, directly to voluptuousness, and the unguarded sense of taste to gluttony and intemperance.

I. The taste was given to man by the Creator to foment the desire of eating and drinking, necessary to the preservation of his health, strength and life. Therefore the sense of taste is not necessarily evil, for the taste is a means to an end, and since the end, the health of the body, is good and the taste has been given us by God, it cannot be sinful to feel the pleasurable sensation of an appetizing meal. The vice of gluttony consists in seeking the means without reference to the end, and thus to eat or drink, because of the pleasure those actions produce, is contrary to the design which God had in view in bestowing upon the body the sense of taste. Therefore Innocent XI. has condemned the following proposition: "To eat and drink up to satiety, for the sake of delectation only, is not a sin, provided it be not injurious to the health; for a natural appetite may enjoy its acts." Hence, it is sinful to eat for the sole purpose of the sensual delectation that one experiences in eating and drinking, because it is a perversion of the end for which man received the gift of taste; but since the act of satisfying one's appetite is itself licit, provided one have the explicit or implicit intention of acting according to a necessity of his nature, the lack of that intention cannot constitute a grievous sin.

We should therefore discriminate between the pleasurable sensation in eating and drinking, and the desire of

satiating the appetite for no other reason that the enjoyment it procures; the latter is illicit, but the former is unavoidable. St. Gregory explains the difference: "The sin does not reside in the nourishment," he says, "but in the affection. Thus it is possible that we commit no fault whatever by eating exquisite aliments and that we render ourselves culpable even by partaking of coarse food. Esau lost his right of primogeniture for a plate of lentils; Elias in the desert preserved his virtue although he ate meat;....the devil vanquished the first Adam, not by offering him meat, but a fruit, and he tempted the second Adam not by presenting Him meat but bread."[1] Man is a rational being: he eats not like a brute for the pleasure of eating, but he satisfies the craving of the appetite, because food is indispensable to preserve his strength, whilst an animal surfeits itself as long as the pleasurable sensation of eating lasts. A pious Christian who is in the habit of eating or drinking no more than is necessary to preserve his natural strength, is abstemious, but one is said to be temperate, if he desists from eating and drinking any more, through fear of injuring his health or strength. Abstemiousness and temperance are both virtues, but the former is the highest degree of the virtue. By total abstinence we understand nowadays the abstaining from all intoxicating drinks and he who has resolved or pledged himself not to partake of beer, wine or other intoxicants, is called a total abstainer. He is abstemious with regard to drink, but he is not necessarily temperate with regard to food. He may be a total abstainer and still be a glutton. Without depreciating the merit of the total abstainer, if his end and purpose be good and laudable, every follower of Christ must strive to be temperate in both eating and drinking, for the vice of gluttony engenders many evils.

II. Gluttony is a sin because it is an inordinate appetite for food and drink, for a desire to eat or drink more than is good is contrary to right reason, and although an act of gluttony is in itself not a mortal sin, it may become a grievous offense, if one foresees the serious evil effects of the vice, or if on account of it one neglects an important duty. Gluttony is also one of the capital sins, because other sins

[1] Mor. L. 30, c. 13.

have their source in the vice, which, as it were, begets them, and therefore St. Thomas names the following evil effects of the vice and calls them its daughters: spiritual blindness, inordinate rejoicing, loquacity, scurrility of speech, indecency of behavior and lasciviousness.

(a) Spiritual blindness born of excessive eating and drinking, renders the soul incapable of praying, of meditating and of thinking seriously on the things that regard our spiritual welfare. This results, according to St. Thomas, because the excesses in eating and drinking weaken one's reason, whilst abstinence is conducive to the acquisition of wisdom, according to Ecclesiastes: "I thought in my heart to withdraw my flesh from wine that I might turn my mind to wisdom." [2] (b) According to the Angelic Doctor, excess in eating and drinking disturbs considerably the appetite and benumbs one's reason, which should control it, and from this a foolish joy ensues; for all passions lead to sadness or hilarity. (c) Loquacity is but a necessary consequence of a benumbed reason and of hilarity, for in that state one is naturally disposed to intemperance in talking. (d) Scurrility or indecency in language and buffoonery in behavior are but consequences of the vapors of wine or of other strong drinks when they rise to the head. (e) The fifth effect is lasciviousness. "To eat meats, to drink wine and the surfeiting of the stomach is to nourish the germs of impurity," says St. Jerome. "It is impossible," says Cassian, "to satisfy completely one's taste without fomenting the rebellion of the flesh." [3]

From the evil consequences of gluttony we must conclude, with the masters of spiritual life, that there can be no hope of spiritual progress without extirpating the vice which begets such dreadful and shameful evils. "We cannot triumph in spiritual combats," says St. Gregory, "before we have vanquished our interior enemy, the inclination to gluttony," [4] and Cassian speaking of the same vile and shameful vice, says: "Never hope to overcome powerful

[2] Eccle. ii. 3.

[3] Instit., L. 8, c. 13. *Cfr.* St. Thomas 2. 2. q. 148 a. 6.

[4] Moral., L. 30, 3. 13.

enemies, if you allow yourselves to be vanquished by less formidable adversaries and in an easier combat." [5]

III. Remedies against glutony: (a) the first remedy against gluttony is the practice of the virtue opposed to it, to wit: temperance; but as drunkenness differs from gluttony, in that it consists in the immoderate use of intoxicants, which directly prevents the use of reason, [6] there must also be a virtue opposed to it, to wit: sobriety, or if one abstains altogether from any or all intoxicants, it is called total abstinence, which considered as a virtue differs from sobriety only in degree.

All Christians are bound to practice sobriety according to the injunction of the Prince of the Apostles: "Be sober and watch," [7] but one need not be a total abstainer to be sober; for we are taught that "Wine taken with sobriety is equal life to men: if you drink moderately thou shalt be sober." [8] The moderate use of wine may become a duty for those who have need of stimulating their sluggish digestive organs; but on the other hand, total abstinence becomes imperative on them who cannot use wine or other intoxicants with moderation. Thus St. Paul writes to Timothy: "Do not still drink water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thy frequent infirmities." [9] The Apostle thus understood and practised the teaching of the Old Testament that: "Wine drank with moderation is the joy of the soul and of the heart. Sober drinking is health to soul and body." [10] St. Thomas teaches that although the moderate use of wine is in itself licit, it may accidentally become illicit, as when the moderate drinker is easily injured through it, or if he have made the vow of total abstinence, or if he cannot drink with moderation without drinking to excess, or if he scandalize thereby his neighbor." [11]

It is undoubtedly more perfect to abstain from wine and other intoxicants—unless they be prescribed as a medicine or as a necessary stimulant—than to use them even with moderation, provided the intention be good, as for the sake of mortifying one's flesh, or of satisfying for one's sins, or of

[5] Constit., L. 6, c. 11. [6] St. Thomas 2. 2 q. 149 a. 2.
[7] 1 Peter v. 8. [8] Eccli. xxxi. 32. [9] 1 Tim. v. 23.
[10] Eccli. xxxi. 36, 37. [11] *Cfr.* St. Thomas 2. 2 q. 149 a. 3.

restraining others from the immoderate use of intoxicants by one's example of total abstinence.

(b) The second remedy against the vice of gluttony consists in imposing upon ourselves fasts compatible with our strength and the duties we have to perform. It must be admitted that it is difficult to maintain perfect moderation in the use of food and drink, so as not to injure one's health, and again, so as not to foment the vice of gluttony. Between these two extremes lies moderation in eating and drinking, or the virtue of temperance; but the virtue of temperance leaves a wide margin open to all, to select from it a particular mode of living with regard to the use of food or drink. One may indeed lead a life of austerity and mortification, choosing in preference the coarsest food, and again, another may be inclined to a life of comfort and partake, three times a day, of a copious and well-prepared meal, and still both may be temperate. Without wishing to impose the former mode on any one as an obligation, we point to the example of the saints who have chosen the arduous life, as the most conducive to perfection, to which they earnestly tended. We may appeal to the practice of the early Christians and even to the practice among the Pharisees, although God had not imposed by any law the obligation of fasting. "Then came to Him the disciples of John saying: Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Thy disciples do not fast?" [12] The Savior, although He Himself fasted, [13] willed not that His disciples should fast whilst He was with them, but He said they would fast when He would no longer be with them. [14] St. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to fast [15] and he himself fasted.[16] The Apostles were wont to fast and pray as a preparation for the important works of their ministry. [17]

All the early Fathers of the Church and the masters of spiritual life have inculcated the necessity of fasting, as a means to resist the evil inclinations of our sinful nature. St. Jerome writes to Nepotianus: "Impose upon yourself as many fasts as you can bear. Let them be pure, chaste, simple, moderate and exempt from superstition... The most

[12] Matt. ix. 14. [13] Matt. iv. 2. [14] *Ibid.*, ix. 15. [15] 2 Cor. vi. 5.
[16] *Ibid.*, xi. 27. [17] Acts xiii. 2.

austere fast is the one observed by being satisfied with bread and water; but as there is nothing in that that attracts attention, because we usually are satisfied with bread and water, it is not regarded as a public and general fast." Thus wrote the great saint and learned scholar, St. Jerome, at the end of the fourth century. The austerities he practised were such that no one would believe them, if he had not consigned them to writing, in documents regarding the administration of many cloisters and monasteries as well as in his letters to his disciples. About a thousand years later another saint, St. Lawrence Justinian,[18] complained of the relaxation in matters of mortification with a sad heart: "Like brave soldiers, full of zeal for the honor and glory of their God, the first Christians mortified their bodies through fasts and exhausted their flesh by a continual abstinence, so that they seemed to decay because of their austerities, for they lived only on vegetables, greens, bread and water; being satisfied with a quantity sufficient to keep from dying; they seemed to nourish themselves rather with spiritual aliments than with corporal food. But, alas! Charity has become so chilled, fervor has so much diminished that in our day we can hardly count a few Christians who are willing to deprive themselves of delicate food."[19] Let us imagine the horror of these two saints if they were confronted with the Catholics of our day, who are held as faithful to their Christian obligations, and nevertheless, in Lent, they eat meat every day, except Wednesdays and Fridays, and in their daily collations they partake of a quantity of fish and eggs that does not exceed eight ounces of solid food, and they drink wine and beer at will, because liquids do not break the fast. What a change has occurred in the spirit of mortification since the Council of Laodicea, which decreed that only dried aliments should be used during the fast of forty days.

Rules for our guidance in fasting.

1. The following rules which guard against excesses in all mortifications that are not imposed by the Church or by confessors as a sacramental penance, are also applicable to fasts, namely, that by mortifications we should not injure our health or render ourselves incapable of complying with

[18] Died 1455. [19] *De discip. monas.*, conver., c. 20.

the duties and virtues of our state of life: this is so self-evident that more citations from the Doctors of the Church, from the saints and masters of spiritual life, seem altogether superfluous. Self-imposed fasts, even if undertaken in a spirit of penance, cease to be acts of virtue, when they prevent the penitent from complying with his obligations or the virtues which he is in duty bound to practice.

As to the ecclesiastical fast, those who are exempt from its obligations, such as those who are under or above the age prescribed, the sick, convalescent and those who are excused by reason of hard labor, should not undertake to fast strictly without consulting their confessor or director; because the Church holds that people exempted from the law, are generally unable to fast, in the strict sense of the word, without endangering their health or without hindering the fulfilment of their obligations. The case is somewhat different with those who are bound to fast, but by a special Indult of the Holy See are allowed the use of meat at the principal meal of certain specified days, and fish, eggs and milk-diet at the collation. Those who are so dispensed may or may not avail themselves of the indulgence offered by the Pontifical Indult, because the lack of the food thus allowed by dispensation, is not likely to become a hindrance to the fulfilment of their other obligations. Nevertheless, if the faster should foresee that, unless he avails himself of the dispensation of the Indult, he will not be able to continue the fast of obligation, a virtuous Christian will not neglect to accept the indulgence, so that he may persevere without injury to himself in his mortification unto the end.

2. Those who for some reason or other are unable to fast, and still are in good health, should supply the mortification thus omitted by some other penance freely imposed, such as the sacrifice of a delicate and most agreeable aliment, of sweetmeats, of all intoxicants and of all pleasures and amusements incompatible with penitential times. They should also eat, with more moderation and without avidity of the food that is allowed, and as a rule never satisfy entirely their appetite. "Moderate food," says St. Jerome, "and of little abundance profits the soul and the body, [20] and

[20] To Rusticus.

to Eustochium he writes: "Take a moderate quantity of nourishment, and never satiate entirely your hunger." This advice is even applicable, according to the same saint, to the most common and coarse foods, "It is necessary to avoid satiety even in the use of the coarsest food: there is nothing that brutalizes the soul as much, than a body so much weighed down with aliments, that he himself suffers from it, and occasions all sorts of indecencies and inconveniences." [21]

When we say that avidity in eating and drinking should be avoided, we do not mean that one should eat and drink without the pleasurable taste that a good appetite necessarily brings on, for that is unavoidable; but we should absolutely eschew the unrestrained inclination of eating like the brute, which simply eats to satisfy its uncontrollable and voracious appetite. We should also mortify the appetite by refraining from eating before the appointed time and from choosing those things only that suit best our taste. Therefore in all that we eat or drink, we should have the purest intention and the sole desire to please God, thus complying with the recommendation of the Apostle: "Whether you eat or drink or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God." [22]

[21] In Jovin. L. 2. [22] 1 Cor. x. 31.

CHAPTER III

The Sense of Sight as an Obstacle to Perfection

The Unguarded Sense of Sight is an Obstacle to Perfection—Temptations Arising from it—Reasons Why We Should Mortify Our Sight—Modesty in One's Conduct and Movements—Modesty of the Eyes—Faults to be Corrected.

I. The sense of sight is the most excellent of all man's senses, because it is the most faithful instrument of the soul to acquire correct knowledge of all material things; but in its very perfection lies its danger, for its influence on the soul, for good or evil, is commensurate to the extent of its power of perfection, which far exceeds that of all the other senses combined. The nature of the sight is to carry to the soul the images of the objects it perceives; but the imagination often distorts those images, combining them with others previously perceived and even with those of other senses. The imagination can also form new combinations, with the aid of the intellect or helped thereto by the intellectual passions or sensual appetites, or by the phenomenon of association; for, as the Angelic Doctor says, a thing can recall another thing by their similarity, their contrast or by simple association. True, the other senses also send their perceptions to the soul, but the fact remains that the sight is the most perfect of all the senses, and its sphere of action extends far and wide, and therefore, the sense of sight brings more images to the imagination than all the other senses united. What is still more worthy of our notice, is that the images begotten of sight, are more vivid and direct than those of any other sense, and hence excite more violently the sensual and intellectual appetites, and these appetites in their turn make a tool of the imagination, which thus readily becomes their slave. How well Job understood the influence of the

sight on the imagination, when he said: "I have made a covenant with my eyes that I would not so much as think upon a virgin." [1] Thus the perception of sight may send to the mind an image of an object, capable of making diverse impressions on the soul. The mind considers it and reflects on it; the appetites of the soul and of the body enter into the counsels of the mind, and if the first impressions be evil, unless they be quickly resisted, they are apt to cloud the intellect and to make the will hesitate, and thus they influence man's reason to take pleasure in evil thoughts and desires, and if occasion presents itself, they may succeed in forcing the will to carry out their evil inclinations. Furthermore, the images produced by the perception of sight are not lost, but they are stored away in the memory to be recalled by the imagination in obedience to intellectual and sensual appetites. Can we imagine the evil consequences of one unguarded look? Therefore, we are seriously warned by these inspired words: "Look not around about thee in the ways of the city nor wander up and down the streets thereof. Turn thy face away from a woman dressed up and gaze not upon another's beauty, for many have perished by the beauty of a woman, and hereby lust is enkindled as a fire." [2] Holy Writ gives many examples of crimes caused by an unguarded look: the sin of David, which after his conversion filled his heart with much compunction and made him shed so many tears; the temptation of the chaste Joseph by the wife of Putiphar, whose glance on Joseph's comeliness stirred up the fire of concupiscence in her breast; the story of the chaste Susanna and the lecherous old men who imprudently watched her walking in her garden, etc.

Imprudent looks may not always lead to such dreadful consequences, but they are undoubtedly always dangerous to the peace and tranquillity of the soul, which is at least disturbed by them, even if no full consent be given to the evil thoughts they awake. Therefore St. Gregory gives the following warning: "So that we may not allow ourselves to be attacked by impure thoughts, we must provide a sure guard for that sense, which is so active; for it is not permitted to regard what we are forbidden to covet." [3]

[1] Job xxxi. 1. [2] Eccli. ix. 7-9. [3] Moral., L. 21, c. 2.

Let us note here how just and opportune the warning of the saint is, for whilst we are awake, the exercise of the sight, requisite for the conservation of the body and indispensable to averting all danger from it, is nearly continual, whether the soul is conscious of its movements and ramblings or not. This continual exercise makes the soul more independent of the control of the will, and although its movements often escape the soul's attention, the soul promptly awakes to consciousness when any object stirs up the evil appetite of our sinful nature. How necessary to keep watch over our eyes, and how difficult to remain sufficiently recollected to guide their movements!

II. One of the principal means by which we are enabled to keep a strict guard over the sight, is to preserve modesty, not only in looks, but also in our words, in our laughter and in our gait; in one word in our whole behavior. Modesty is a virtue by which man's exterior actions and the adornment of the body are so well moderated as not to offend anyone. It is founded on humility reduced to practice, and in that sense we must understand the advice of the Apostle: "Let your modesty be known to all men." [4] Man's exterior behavior is as it were a mirror, in which the sentiments of his soul are reflected and his inward feelings are disclosed to the gaze of others. True, humility may not always be sincere, and unless exterior modesty correspond to the interior sentiments of the soul, it is but a mere sham, plain hypocrisy.

1. Modesty in looks. We have seen the danger of unguarded sight and therefore, curiosity or the dissipation of the mind that prompts us to see all that happens around us, should be checked, especially by those who aspire after perfection. It is not forbidden to use our eyes for the sake of an honest recreation or to acquire useful knowledge, nor does modesty demand that we should always look upon the ground before us, without raising our eyes: such affectation denotes bad breeding, especially so, when we address anyone or some one addresses us. If the person spoken to is of another sex, prudence and modesty require that we should not fix our regards upon such a person and that we should

[4] Phil. iv. 5.

lower the eyes or divert them to either side after the first look of recognition, which is imposed by courtesy and urbanity, according to the teaching of St. Gregory: "The eyes ought to be depressed, as they are ravishers intent upon vice." [5]

2. Even in our laughter modesty should be observed. "Those that give themselves up to piety," says St. Basil, "should take care not to laugh to excess: excessive hilarity is the mark of a want of moderation in the soul, and proves that the interior movements are not at all regulated. Notwithstanding, to laugh moderately in order to manifest one's joy is not against civility." [6] What needs especially to be avoided is loud laughter, for this is opposed to modesty of behavior.

3. Modesty in our gait. Of this St. Basil says: "Let your gait not be indolent, for that denotes a dissolute mind, nor again violent or excessively precipitate, for that is a mark of an impetuous and insolent mind." [7] As to our attitude as well as to our gait, we should avoid anything that attracts attention, such as inordinate gesticulations, a swinging of the body to and fro or of the arms, a continual nodding and shaking of the head, etc.

4. To this we should add modesty in dress and avoid on one side, slovenliness in attire, and on the other, an excessive elegance in dress. Somber garments are suitable to all people, but especially to a Christian, whose life should be given up to penance and mortification. Vanity in dress is a great obstacle to a pious life, and luxury together with a beautiful face has been the ruin of thousands of thousands of young women. "Christian virgins who are dressed in silk and purple," says St. Cyprian, "cannot perfectly put on Jesus Christ; and if they are adorned with gold and precious stones, they lose the ornament of their soul and body." [8] St. Paul praises "women adorning themselves with modesty and sobriety, not with plaited hair or gold or pearls, or costly attire, but as it becometh women professing godliness with good works." [9] As to Christian wives, St. Peter is

[5] Moral, L. 21 c. 2. [6] In *Regul. fusius expl.*, Q. 17.

[7] *Epist. ad Gregor. Theol.*

[8] *De Habit. virg.*, L. 4. [9] 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10.

far from advising them to gain the confidence of their husbands by luxury in dress, for he warns them saying: "Whose adorning let it not be the outward plaiting of the hair or the wearing of gold or the putting on of apparel." [10]

5. Modesty in words and conversation. St. Ambrose lays down the following rule: "Do not exceed the manner of speaking, (*i. e.*, do not talk too much,) for fear that your discourse may sound indecorous, for the mirror of the mind usually shines in our words; modesty weighs even the sound of the voice, so that an over loud voice may not offend any one's ear." [11]

Thus modesty demands that we should not speak oftener nor longer than urbanity demands. We should never interrupt the conversations of others and we should above all, not be so fond of talking, as to give no one else an opportunity of saying a word. Reserve in speaking is better than loquacity, but the absolute taciturnity of those, from whom only a cold yes or no can be drawn, is equally blamable. Let us seek in conversation the good pleasure of others and not our own, and preserve sufficient recollection, so as not to utter a word that may shock the sensibility of delicate souls or may in the least offend God, Who hears every word that is spoken. Those who aim at perfection should particularly avoid frivolous and worldly topics of conversation, for they cause dissipation of the mind, if they have no more serious consequences. Religious and devout souls choose for their conversation, useful or pious subjects tending to enlightening the mind and to elevating it to things heavenly. If we were always conscious of God's presence, worldly things would find no place in our familiar colloquies.

Modesty in speech must be particularly observed, for it is the ordinary channel, by which our thoughts and the sentiments of our soul are directly made manifest, and communicated to our fellow-men; but whereas the tongue is popularly credited with being the principal organ of speech, and is identified with it, and whereas an untamed tongue is likewise a great obstacle to perfection, we will devote to it a whole chapter after we have given due consideration to

[10] 1 Peter iii. 3. [11] *De offic.*, L. 4. 4.

the organs of hearing and smell, in so far as they are in opposition to our advancement in spiritual life.

6. All that we have said about modesty and looks and conduct in general, applies more forcibly to priests and religious, who are supposed, according to the expression of the Apostle, to have put on Christ, that is, who have earnestly determined to walk in His footsteps and to follow not only His laws, but His counsels as well. Priests and religious are, as it were, the leaders of Christian society and their example attracts the largest majority of the faithful either towards good or evil. "You are the light of the world," says the Savior, "...So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in Heaven." [12] Modesty is thus above all necessary to ecclesiastics and religious as the people of the world judge from their exterior conduct the intimate sentiments and affections of their heart. According to St. Basil the bare lack or want of modesty is more apt to cause scandal than more grievous faults among the laity. Here are his words: "The faults of obscure persons are not noticed as much as those of high rank. Truly, when a man of the people gives way to hilarity, to unreasonable gaity, or to any other immodesty, not much notice is taken of it, because everyone thinks that those actions correspond to the habitual life of that man; but if he, who professes a state of perfection, is wanting publicly to his duty in anything, all notice it immediately and make a crime of it, and, as Holy Scripture says, they turn against him and tear his reputation to pieces." [13] Therefore we should conclude with St. Jerome, who writes to Rusticus that priests and religious should observe such modesty in all their exterior, "That their dress, their gait, their countenance, their whole person be a sermon that incites to virtue."

[12] Matt. v. 14, 16.

[13] In *Reg. fusius explic.*, 9. 22.

CHAPTER IV

Obstacles Which the Senses of Hearing and Smell Cause to Perfection

The Organ of Hearing—Conversations—Particular Dangers of this Sense—Defamation—Detraction—Remedies against Detraction and Rules Dictated by Justice and Charity to be Observed—The Sense of Smell.

I. We have great reason to thank our good God for the organs of hearing, for to that sense we owe many spiritual and temporal favors of which we would be deprived without it. The most precious gift of faith, without which adults cannot be saved, comes to us through that sense, for "Faith comes by hearing." [1] We are also conscious of the great temporal advantages which the proper use of the sense of hearing bestows upon us; but like the other senses, this one is easily abused. What devices does the devil and worldlings not employ to filter and percolate through our ears into our soul the venom of incredulity and vicious maxims of the world, and to instill in our minds and hearts the love of forbidden pleasures, of riches, of ambition and vainglory. Truly we may say, that the ear is a window through which life and death may enter into the soul; and the sense of hearing has this peculiarity, that we cannot shut our ears and prevent its preceptions from penetrating into our soul, as we can our eyes and our mouth. In order to free ourselves from its evil influences we must flee from their occasions: avoid persons and places, where ribaldry, obscene conversation, suggestive songs, loose theatrical dialogues, impious or licentious discourse, backbiting and slander may offend the piety and purity of a sincere Christian.

We have spoken already on the necessity of bridling our

[1] Rom. x. 17.

tongue, and it behooves us now to examine how we should avoid becoming accomplices with those who sin against charity in their speech, when we are unwilling listeners of uncharitable remarks against our neighbor.

To listen with complaisance to a discourse or utterances by which God is offended, is not only sinful, it is a crime. A pious Christian is horrified when the name of God is blasphemed, when His holy doctrine is despised, and when His laws and the practices of His Church are ridiculed; but there is a more insidious way of contemning His holy will, and because more common, little notice is taken of it. Catholics in general and all God-fearing people strongly disapprove of slander and calumny, because of its downright injustice, and of contumely, because of its rudeness and lack of refinement; but what about detraction and the criticism of our neighbor's conduct? "There are very few," says St. Jerome, "who renounce this vice and you will rarely find faithful, who are willing to lead such an irreprehensible life, that they refuse even the liberty of criticising the life of others. That passion draws so violently the soul of man away, that even those who have corrected themselves of other vices, fall still into this one, as into the last snare of the demon." [2] The action of detracting and the hearing it are so closely united, that of necessity one cannot exist without the other: if there were no hearers of detraction, there could be no detractors.

The evil done in society by so much detraction can hardly be exaggerated. It is in itself a lesser evil than calumny, but it has become so general, that there is no denying the fact that it causes irreparable damage throughout the Christian world. Detraction usually causes a triple wound: it wounds the reputation of the one at whom a detraction is aimed; it wounds the soul of the listener, because it is for him an occasion of scandal and of sin, and it wounds the detractor himself, for it makes him contemptible to the piously inclined Christian and odious to his God; for St. Paul calls "Detractors, hateful to God." [3]

Every man has an inherent right to his reputation as well as to his worldly possessions, and he who robs a man

[2] *Ep. ad Calanc.* [3] Rom. i. 30.

of his good name commits a greater theft, than the sneaking thief who deprives him of some of his goods; for "A good name is better than great riches." [4]

If anyone should remark that when he speaks ill of his neighbor, he does it out of levity and not out of malice, we will answer with St. Bernard: "It helps us nothing to say: the words are light and no one takes them seriously. Yes, the words are light because they fly lightly, but they wound grievously; they pass quickly, but they burn but all too vividly." [5]

It is true that detraction is not always a mortal sin, but who knows what will be the consequences of slightly censuring our neighbor's conduct? How will he take it, if the censure or reproach is reported to him? How sensitive to reproach and abuse are we not? How many enmities has a slight detraction caused? How many sincere friends have become implacable enemies through censure, ridicule and criticism?

What opinion should we now form of a willing listener to a detraction? "It is not easy to decide," says St. Bernard, "who is the more guilty, the detractor or the listener." [6] St. Basil would have them both banished from society. "It is necessary," he says, "to chase them away from the society of others; for it is written: I will persecute him who speaks ill of his neighbor. Listen not willingly to a detractor, lest you be banished." [7] St. Jerome gives the reason why we should not listen to a detractor nor believe him: "If we took care," he says, "not to believe detractors, they would all be afraid of defaming any one; but the evil is indeed common; that defect exists among many, because every one listens to them." [8]

From the arguments already adduced and from our own experience we necessarily conclude that in order to banish from society all kinds of blackening another's reputation and every species of criticism against any member thereof, the best and most effective way would be to refuse a hearing to the detractor; but in this, unanimity of action would be required among all those who condemn the prevailing vice.

[4] Prov. xxii. 1. [5] Serm. 3 *in Dedic. Eccl.* [6] *De consid.*, L. 2.
[7] In *Regulis brev.* Reg. 25. [8] *Epist. ad Calanc.*

Some lack the courage to show their disapprobation, some allege for excuse that by refusing to listen to a detractor, they will lose his friendship or attract his ill-will, and as a consequence, serious harm will come to them; others again will say: we know that detraction is a great evil, but it is so common that one could only escape it by leaving this world.

Let us first of all proclaim as a certain principle, that either charity or justice or both bind us in conscience, to prevent others from sinning through detraction, and we are likewise bound in justice to ourselves to preserve the good reputation of our neighbor. The first and most practical way to avoid any responsibility in another's sin of detraction, is to follow the rule which the Holy Ghost has laid down for our guidance: "My son....have nothing to do with detractors," [9] and "Let detracting lips be far from thee." [10] If notwithstanding all our caution, we happen to hear our neighbor defamed unjustly, a distinction becomes necessary: if the detractor be a person whose ill-will we have reason to fear, because we depend upon him for many of the favors we enjoy, we should rather shift adroitly the conversation to another subject; if he be a superior, whom we revere, and we cannot change the topic, then we should show in some manner that to listen to the detraction is very painful to us, or we should at once become serious and pensive as if a great weight were pressing upon our mind. It is this latter mode of repelling all co-operation in a detraction, which is indicated to us in Holy Scripture, wherein we read: "The north wind driveth away rain, as doth a sad countenance a backbiting tongue." [11] If on the contrary the detractor be equal to us in dignity, and we have no reason to fear him, especially so, if he be a friend or an inferior, we should have the courage to follow the advice of St. Chrysostom: "Tell the detractor: if you have in mind to praise or recommend anyone, I listen to you to gather your benevolent words, but if you desire to defame your neighbor, I shall forthwith shut my ears, for I shall not allow that you pollute them." [12] "Reprove a friend," says Ecclesiasticus, "that he may do it no more. Reprove thy neighbor that he

[9] Prov. xxiv. 21. [10] *Ibid.*, iv. 24. [11] Prov. xxv. 23. [12] Hom. iii.

may not say it again. Admonish thy friend, for there is often a fault committed." [13] No matter what may be our reason for not resisting a backbiting tongue, we can hardly remain free from sin, when we willingly listen to any unjust defamation of character or even to any serious criticism. Our self-love is so deeply rooted in our hearts, that it is hardly possible not to feel a satisfaction when we hear anyone blamed or belittled, as if the humiliation of others enhanced our worth and dignity. Therefore our own weakness is another reason why we should shun the company of detractors. It is well also that we be prepared to meet the danger of participating in another's sin of backbiting, with some subterfuge or artifice thought of beforehand, with the purpose of using it when we unexpectedly happen to be in a gathering in which people are defamed or unduly censured. When the conversation takes place between two persons only, it is difficult to resort to any other artifice than to adroitly change the offensive topic; but when there are many persons listening, one may easily absent himself or begin a conversation on another subject with a guest next to him. In any case, charity as well as justice often demand that we should manifest our disapprobation of the vile custom of defaming absent brethren, and although we cannot, in every case, impose as a duty to follow the advice given by St. John Chrysostom, if we had many men and women imbued as he was, with an ardent love of God and of neighbor, and with a like courage to prove it by their words and actions, their united efforts would soon extirpate the all too prevalent vice of detraction.

What we are absolutely forbidden to do is to approve a defamation or to encourage the detractor, either by laughing, or by showing interest in the defamatory statements by any sign, question, remark or exclamation. Let the listener rather recollect himself, be sad, because God is offended and his neighbor is wronged, and this sad and anxious demeanor will free him from participation in the sin, and may keep the detractor from persisting in his uncharitable remarks against his fellow-men.

II. Sense of smell. The smell is of all the senses the least

[13] Eccli. xix. 13-15.

dangerous, because it is the least sensual; and because of its weakness, it offers but little obstacle to our advancement in spiritual life. People that make constant and immoderate use of perfumes displease indeed slightly Our Lord, and sometimes molest thereby their neighbors, who with difficulty support the strong odors of any perfume; but their greatest sin is their extravagance in spending uselessly sums of money, which should be devoted to the relief of the needy.

Perfection demands that we should not only deprive ourselves of the luxury of agreeable odors and exquisite perfumes, but that we should likewise mortify the sense of smell by suffering patiently the offensive odors we encounter in our ordinary duties or in our charitable ministrations to the sick or destitute. The mortification of the sense of smell aids in overcoming any other evil tendency in man, and he who is deficient in mortifying the sense of smell, which demands but scant effort, is not likely to vanquish completely the vicious inclinations of more violent sensual appetites.

CHAPTER V

The Tongue as an Obstacle to Perfection

I. It is Necessary to Control the Tongue but Impossible to Tame it—II. Means by Which We Can Bridle the Tongue: 1. Prayer. 2. The Consideration of the Evil Results of an Unbridled Tongue. 3. Particular Care Required Regarding What We Say in Our Conversation—Foresight to Guard Against Past Errors—4. Daily Examination of Conscience with Regard to Our Utterances During the Day with a Strong Resolution of Avoiding Previous Faults—5. Habitual Silence.

I. No man who has ever weighed his words, which he uttered in his conversation or has seriously reflected on the utterances of his friends or acquaintances, but is forced to admit that there is no organ in his body that is more difficult to control than his tongue. No one has expressed that truth more vividly than the Apostle St. James in the third chapter of his epistle. Because of its small size he compares the tongue to a little fire that kindles a great wood and then he adds: "Every kind of beasts and of birds and of serpents and of the rest is tamed and hath been tamed by the nature of man, but the tongue, no man can tame." [1] St. Augustine makes the same observation: "Man tames a ferocious beast," he says, "and he tames not his tongue; he tames a lion, but he does not succeed in mastering his speech. He tames others but he tames not himself." [2]

Many other saints have humbly acknowledged that notwithstanding their circumspection and their constant vigilance, they have not been able to guard against many faults committed by the tongue, and how could it be otherwise, when Holy Writ itself seems to indicate that it is next to impossible not to sin with the tongue. "For who is there who hath not offended with his tongue?" [3] Those who never sin with the tongue are declared perfect by St. James: "In

[1] James iii. 7. [2] *De verbo Dom.*, Serm. 4, c. 1. [3] Eccli. xix. 17.

many things we all offend," he says, "if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man," and why so? "Because he is also able with a bridle to lead about the whole body." [4] St. James thus teaches us that only a perfect man can bridle his tongue, because by so doing he can regulate every other organ and subdue all the sensual appetites. What an incentive for all those who aspire to perfection to bridle that restless little member of our body, more difficult to tame than the most ferocious animal, and so powerful, that when once subdued, it will direct with ease, says the same Apostle, all the movements of the body, in the same manner as the helm of a ship, driven by a strong wind, turns the ship in the direction mapped out by the captain.

Let us now see by what means we can tame, bridle and master our tongue.

1. The first remedy against the obstacle to perfection proceeding from an unmastered tongue, is prayer; for "It is the part of men to prepare the soul and of the Lord to govern the tongue." [5] Without prayer all our efforts to subdue the restless organ of speech, would be fruitless and vain; because we are clearly taught that God alone can tame the turbulent member. "Let us be thoroughly convinced," says St. Augustine, "that as no man can tame his tongue, we must have recourse to God to tame ours by His grace... To tame animals recourse is had to man; likewise recourse is to be had to God to tame man himself." [6] Therefore, we should not cease to repeat in our heart the prayer of the Prophet King: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth and a door round about my lips." [7]

2. The second remedy for repressing the restlessness of the tongue is to seriously consider the many evils brought about by it, for "The tongue," says St. James, "is indeed a little member, but it boasteth of great things. Behold how a small fire kindleth a great wood, and the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity." [8] St. Gregory of Nazianzen speaks in the same sense and only develops what the apostle has taught us; and likewise St. Bernard. [9] From the consideration of the evil wrought by the tongue, we shall not

[4] James iii. 2. [5] Prov. xvi. 1. [6] *De verbo Dom.*, Serm. 4, c. 2.
[7] Ps. cxl. 3. [8] James iii. 5. [9] *De trip. Custod*

fail to form suitable resolutions for our future conduct, if we wish to avoid the evil consequences of an unbridled tongue; but first of all the heart must be purified of all dangerous affections, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." [10]

3. The third remedy against the depraved organ of speech is constant and careful watchfulness over all our conversations and over every word we speak. There is nothing more commendable than to think seriously before speaking and whilst we are speaking. How many are there who giddily blab all that comes to their mind, without thinking of what they say; but how many also, who when they carefully consider what they have said, wish they had omitted many things of what they said. Therefore we should weigh beforehand our words, submit them to a severe scrutiny and then only make our thoughts known, when we are conscious that nothing in them can offend God or our neighbor. Thus we shall follow the rule laid down by St. James: "Let every man be swift to hear but slow to speak," [11] and the advice of Ecclesiasticus: "Take heed lest thou slip with thy tongue; and make a balance for thy words and a just bridle for thy mouth." [12] Why should we make scales for our words but to carefully weigh them, that we may not slip with the tongue and thereafter regret our giddiness?

4. To this we should add every evening of the day, on which we have been in conversation with one or more persons, a rigorous examination of conscience on what we have spoken and on the manner we have said it. Have we not spoken more than it behooved or remained silent when we should have spoken? For there is "A time to keep silence and a time to speak." [13] "There is one who holdeth his speech, who is found wise and there is another who is hateful, who is bold in speech... A wise man will hold his peace till he see an opportunity, but a babbler and a fool will regard no time." [14] Still we should rather lean to silence, which springs from timidity, than to inconsiderate loquacity, begotten of boldness and self-esteem; for "He that useth many words shall hurt his own soul." [15] Again,

[10] Matt. xii. 43. [11] James i. 19. [12] Eccli. xxviii. 29, 30.
[13] Eccli. iii. 7. [14] Eccli. xx. 5, 7. [15] Eccli. xx. 8.

timidity especially in young people, in the presence of persons of dignity or older than themselves, is praiseworthy, for they should listen with eagerness to the conversation of the wise, and learn from the wisdom that shines in their discourses. We should likewise scrutinize all that regards the manner and circumstances of our conversation, for when we are called upon to speak, we should speak without precipitation, without vainglory, and without wishing to impress upon others our superiority of knowledge. Thus modesty born of sincere humility, which must be deeply inculcated into the souls of all, will furnish the norm or rule by which we should judge our manner of speaking, and by it also the faults we have committed will be easily disclosed and appear in their proper light.

The most severe scrutiny of our conscience, concerning the faults we may have committed in conversing with others, would be fruitless unless we join to it a strong determination to avoid similar defects in the future. If in our judgment the fault constituted a deliberate sin, although venial only, a sincere act of contrition should be added, with a self-imposed penance commensurate to the transgression; for sin, however slight, should be expiated forthwith by a suitable penance, as the guilt of a venial sin partly shuts us off from that inexhaustible source of grace, which flows with such abundance upon those, who are free from the fully deliberate transgressions of God's commandments.

The daily practice of a suitable examination of conscience, coupled with the detestation of the faults committed in previous discourses, together with a firm determination of avoiding them in the future, will go far to solve the question, which Ecclesiasticus proposes to himself in the sadness of his heart, at the sight of the many sins committed daily by a glib and nimble tongue: "Who will set," he says, "a guard before my tongue, and seal upon my lips, that I may not fall by them and that my tongue destroy me not?" [16] By a firm and fixed resolve, often renewed, not to fall again into former defects of speech, the pious Christian sets a guard before his mouth and a seal upon his lips that his tongue may nowise harm his soul.

[16] Eccli. xxii. 33.

5. The last remedy consists in habitual silence to be broken only when necessity or the good of our neighbor requires it. This remedy should be mainly employed for the incurable defects of a nimble tongue. When every other remedy has failed, the severity of keeping silence, adopted as a rule, will assuredly triumph over the most obdurate and inveterate loquacity. Religious have their time of silence, which should be rigorously kept, but they have also a time of recreation, during which they should endeavor to make themselves and their conversation agreeable to their companions, without distinction and without preference for any one in particular. If we except the hours of silence and recreation, religious of both sexes should remain habitually silent, although their rules may give them a certain latitude to talk during the many occupations of the day.

As we remarked on the subject of temperance in eating and drinking, one may take for rule not to eat or drink any more than what he considers necessary to maintain his physical strength, another may choose to eat and drink everything that in his judgment is not detrimental to his health; both are temperate, but there is between the one and the other kind of temperance, a wide scope for liberty of action, within the limits of which no fault will be committed. Likewise one may choose never to say a word unless charity or duty compels him; another may prefer to talk whenever he sees no harm in it; both preserve moderation of speech and neither sins, except, in the latter alternative, if one should have made the vow always to choose what is most perfect. If neither sins, what must we think of the silence of religious, whose calling is one of perfection, and how shall we judge all others, who aspire to a perfect life? Which is the most helpful to preserve recollection and to avoid dissipation of the mind, habitual silence, if neither duty nor charity compels us to break it, or loquacity, if we suppose it free from guilt? If we admit as we should, that it is more perfect to observe silence, unless there be a sufficient reason to break it, than to talk without being moved thereto by duty or charity, should we not also confess that they who aim at perfection should impose habitual silence upon themselves?

Habitual silence may also be undertaken in a spirit of mortification—and mortification it undoubtedly is, for it costs to tie down the glib organ of speech—and thus understood, it becomes obligatory upon all those who have to deplore more or less serious defects in their conversations. Let such as these imitate St. Gregory Nazianzene, who says of himself: "When I perceived that through the impetuosity of my precipitate discourse, I passed the bounds of moderation, I found no better means to repress my loquacity than a fast and silence of forty days, that thus my tongue might learn what it had to say and what it had to leave unsaid. If you ask me why I exercised such rigor towards myself, I will answer: It was to better moderate my discourses that I abstained entirely from speaking." [17]

Let us hear what St. James has to say to all those who wish to walk in the path of holiness: "If any one think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is vain." [18] Thus we cannot presume to be truly religious, unless we have subdued the restless organ of speech, and how shall we securely bridle and tame it, but, as St. Gregory of Nazianzus says, by learning what to say and what should be better left unsaid. A concomitant but most useful knowledge is that we acquire by listening to the discourse of the wise, for: "If thou learn to listen thou shalt be wise," [19] and "A wise man shall hear and shall be wiser." [20] This is mainly applicable to the youth of both sexes, as a smattering of knowledge makes a sciolist presumptuous and arrogant: he presumes to speak before his seniors, when he should be attentive to what mature minds have to say.

Although people in the busy world could not keep habitually silent, without failing in their duties to those with whom they live, or have frequent intercourse—for they have to be all to all and prove themselves to be most agreeable to those of their household—nevertheless they also should mortify their tongues and often seek seclusion to commune with their God and await in silence the inspirations of the Divine Will, with that feeling of reverence which made the youthful

[17] *De Silent in Quad. Jejun.* [18] James i. 26.
[19] Eccli. vi. 34. [20] Prov. i. 5.

Samuel hearken to God, when he said: "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant listeneth."[21] Thus will they imitate Christ their model, who sought, after His arduous labors of the day, the sole companionship of His heavenly Father. People of both sexes, young and old, will find an additional example for their imitation in the Savior's blessed Mother, who never appeared in public, except when prompted thereto by duty or charity. Let us then learn and cultivate the science of habitual silence: it is the school of wisdom; and the fear of offending God in our daily intercourse with others is the beginning of it: "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord."[22]

[21] 1 Kings iii. 10. [22] Eccli. i. 16.

ARTICLE II

The Passions of the Soul as Obstacles to Perfection

I. The Passions Are the Interior Affections or Sentiments of the Soul—Their Number—They Are Not Essentially Evil—When Are They Good and When Are They Evil?—Complete Impassivity Is Unattainable—Vices Have Their Source in the Unmortified Passions—II. How Ill-regulated Passions are an Obstacle to Spiritual Advancement—Proofs—III. Means to Combat the Passions: 1. Prompt Resistance to a Passion as Soon as it is Felt—2. Combat First the Dominant Passion—3. Direct all the Passions to a Holy End and Utilize Their Energies, When They are Kept in Their Proper Channels.

I. In the last article we had under consideration the sensual appetites as obstacles to perfection, and particular stress was laid on the necessity of repressing and mortifying them. Now we come to other enemies of our spiritual welfare, which we find in our interior itself, in the soul created to the image and likeness of God, in that soul endowed with will, memory and understanding, but a soul vitiated by original sin. There are many who have labored strenuously to conquer their sensual appetites, and notwithstanding they have made but little progress in virtue; and the reason is, that they have neglected to overcome the evil inclinations of the noblest part of their being; they have looked after the rebellious senses, so destructive of spiritual life, but they were nowise concerned about the soul's evil inclinations. If the soul itself had no vicious appetites, the world, the devil and the flesh should cause but little apprehension, but if the soul's affections themselves are bent upon evil, or are first moved by the wicked influence of the sensual appetites, which act so perniciously upon man's noblest faculties, then is the intellect obscured, the will weakened, and reason loses the full dominion it should exercise over the soul's inordinate emotions and affections, as well as over the sensual appetites.

It behooves us then to study the inordinate affections of

the soul, which ally themselves so easily to the sensual appetites to complete our spiritual ruin.

The inclinations and affections of the soul, which directly influence and move the intellect and will to act, are often called intellectual appetites, because they, like hunger and thirst, demand to be satiated, and besides their influence is first noticed by the intellect; hence the name intellectual appetites. We call them the passions of the soul to distinguish them from the sensual appetites or the concupiscence of the flesh.

In the soul we first observe the intellect and the will; and for a better understanding of the faculties of the soul, we place them in the superior part of the soul, for they are its noblest faculties. The memory and the imagination are closely allied to the above faculties and thus they are united together with them in the superior part. In the inferior part, we place the passions or appetites, mainly because they often incline the intellect and will to deviate from the path indicated by sound reason.

The affections of the soul, whether good or evil, or the individual dispositions and inclinations of a person, are commonly designated as the heart of a man; nor is the name entirely restricted to the soul only, for it is sometimes applied even to the sensual appetites; thus we say of a lustful man that he has an impure heart.

St. Thomas names eleven passions: love and its contrary, hatred; desire and its contrary, flight or abomination; joy and its contrary, sadness; hope and its contrary, despair; fear and its contrary, audacity, and finally anger, which has no contrary.[1] All these passions spring from one, love. We love what we judge to be good and we hate what in our estimation is evil, because it robs us of something that we love as being good. We desire a future or prospective good and we abominate future evil or flee from it; when the good is attained, we give way to joy and when evil is upon us, we give way to sadness; we hope for the good that can only be obtained with difficulty, and we despair, when, in spite of great efforts to escape it, great evil befalls us; we fear an evil that is proximate or we are audacious in re-

[1] St. Thomas, i. 2. q. 19 a. 2.

pelling it or in striving for a coveted good, and finally, we are angered at the cause, when evil has overtaken us. [2]

According to the Angelic Doctor six passions belong to the concupiscible appetite, to wit: love, hatred, desire, flight or abomination, joy and sadness; and five belong to the irascible appetites, to wit: hope, despair, fear, audacity and anger.

Passions in themselves are neither good nor bad. They become good when they are controlled and directed by sound reason; but if not, they become a real evil and an obstacle to our advancement in spiritual life. We should nevertheless remark that, owing to original sin we all inherit, the passions are no longer subject to reason, and the corruption of our nature compels us to regard the passions, as great obstacles to salvation, as well as to perfection. They may be subdued by the will of man, assisted by the grace of God, but, if left unmastered, they will obscure the intellect and weaken the will, like the sensual appetites that are untamed and unconquered.

Hence the passions of the soul, in so far as they are opposed to good order and right reason, incline the soul to vice, but in so far as they conform to reason they belong to virtue. [3] Again when passions precede the acts of the will and obscure the intellect, they diminish the moral goodness of an act, for it is more praiseworthy, says St. Thomas, to give alms, moved thereto by right reason alone, than if one be induced thereto solely by a feeling or passion of mercy or benevolence; but if a passion follows or accompanies the will in executing a virtuous deed, then the good deed grows in merit in proportion to the ardor of the will. One may also call a passion to his aid to execute more promptly the good deed he has determined to perform, and to will, with more eagerness, the execution of the virtuous deed already decided upon. Such would be the case, if a man had determined to give alms to the poor within a month, but on hearing the great misery of a certain family, he is moved to compassion for the sufferers, and thus he decides not to defer his charitable design, and succors the needy forthwith

[2] *Cfr.* St. Thomas, i. 2. q. 23 a. 4.

[3] *Loc. cit.*, a. 2 to 3.

or gives more abundantly.[4] Thus the passions may be brought under the control of reason and both may tend to the same deed acceptable to God, and the merit thereof is thereby increased.

Passions considered in themselves are neither good nor bad, for love is a passion, and to love God, our neighbor and virtue, is always laudable; again, if we hate sin, desire holiness, abominate iniquity, rejoice over good deeds and feel sad over the misfortunes of other. St. Augustine explains clearly the teaching here laid down: "When the passions," he says, "humbly follow the light of sound reason, who will dare say that they are maladies and vicious affections of the soul? Our Lord Himself, having deigned to put on the form of a slave to live a human life, without contracting its corruption, has willed to feel the different passions in all the circumstances in which He judged it proper. The Gospel teaches it; it is then true that Jesus Christ was angered because of the blindness of the Jews, that He has said: I rejoice on your account that you may believe,[5] that He shed tears before raising Lazarus to life,[6] that He desired to eat the Pasch with His disciples,[7] and that at the approach of His sorrowful passion, His soul was sad unto death.[8]

The Holy Scriptures and especially the psalms of David are filled with expressions of joy, grief, hope, etc., attributed to saintly men. Moreover if any one pretended to extinguish the passions of his soul, "It would be like willing that man may exist without human nature and that he may be corporeal without body."[9]

From the remotest times among the Greek and later among the Roman philosophers, there have been serious errors and misconceptions about the nature of the passions and the necessity of combating them. The Stoics would impose upon man the obligation of subduing the passions until their sting is no longer felt; but the Epicureans would rather not oppose them, so that they might enjoy greater felicity thereby. The Origenists, the Pelagians and others, similar in this to the Stoics, held that man is bound and is

[4] *Loc. cit.*, a. 3 to 1. [5] John xi. 15. [6] *Ibid.*, xxxv.
[7] Luke xxi. 15. [8] Matt. xxvi. 38. [9] St. Jerome.

able by his efforts to totally extinguish the fire of the passions.

Setting aside all these vagaries, which the teachings of the Gospel and experience have gainsaid, we lay down these fundamental principles which must guide our judgment in our estimation of the nature of the passions and of the best means to combat them.

II. Man's good sense and the Christian religion teach him that passions exist in the soul and form as it were a part of our nature, and experience, gathered from our lives and the lives of others, convinces all fair minded men that the expectation of totally extinguishing them by any effort of ours is futile and chimerical.

1. If we cannot totally eradicate the passions from the soul, we can at least diminish their opposition to right reason, by bringing them as far as possible under the dominion of the will. We are helped thereto by the grace of God, which is never denied to them who humbly implore the divine assistance.

2. Passions, if not evil in themselves, must nevertheless be repressed, if we wish that our efforts to acquire the moral virtues, which we are bound to practice, be not hampered by their evil inclinations, which cause obscurity of the mind and weakness of the will. They are a constant menace to the soul and are particularly harmful to those who strive for perfection, which consists in charity or the perfect love of God and of neighbor. What can there be in common between charity and the passions of self-love, envy, anger, cupidity, the love of the world and similar passions, against which we are so often warned in Holy Scripture and in the discourses of Our Lord. In the same proportion that the passions, and the vices born of them, increase and become bold and urgent, in like proportion charity diminishes and becomes cold and weak, and conversely; for as St. Augustine says: "The diminution of cupidity makes for the increase of charity, and the absence of cupidity makes for perfection. Therefore, he who desires to fortify charity in himself, must weaken his passions." [10]

3. Two other considerations point to the obligation of

[10] Quest. L. 83, q. 36.

curbing and of subduing our passions, and the first is that we can do nothing, nor think, nor speak without encountering in our acts, whether physical or intellectual only, the influence of the passions for good or evil. If we comply with our duties towards God or neighbor, the poison of vainglory is ready to filter into the soul, by our desiring to seek some advantage through it; if we give alms, the passion of self-love will suggest that the beneficiary of our charity will testify his gratitude towards us or will extol our generosity; if we pray even in secret, we are reminded either that we have become more pious than formerly, or that we are more godly than some of our acquaintance or than people in general. If we converse with others, pride inclines us to say something to our advantage, to the honor of our relatives or of the people we associate with. If we look into the future or remember the past, our prospect into the future or our retrospect of the past is never free from the malign influence of some passion, but most frequently self-love is at the bottom of our love or hatred, of our sadness or joy, the four passions to which all the others can be reduced. Self-love must be annihilated as far as possible, and the love of God and of our neighbor must be substituted instead. Therefore our Divine Master reminds us all to renounce ourselves: "If any man will come after Me," He says, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."[11] Of what cross does the Savior speak but the cross that consists in conquering self-love, as well as the sensual appetites and passions that foster it.

4. Another consideration which should induce us to mortify and master our passions, is that unless they are subdued, they gain in strength day by day until they become violent and aggressive, and refuse obedience to the will; they ally themselves with the sensual appetites and that coalescence between the concupiscence of the flesh and the passions becomes a most formidable enemy to the salvation of the individual and the stability of society; for to it must be attributed those crimes that horrify even obdurate sinners. Therefore Holy Scripture reminds us, not only to subdue our passions, but likewise to conquer the rebellious

[11] Matt. xvi. 24.

flesh. "They that are Christ's," says St. Paul, "have crucified their flesh with the vices and concupiscences."[12] Of the concupiscence of the flesh we have spoken in the last article, and the vices, if we take them as the principal sources or causes of most all other sins, are, according to St. Thomas, seven, to wit: Pride, avarice, lust, gluttony, anger, envy and sloth.[13] They are commonly called capital sins and St. Gregory calls them the army of the devil, with pride as the queen of all the rest; and pride is nothing else than the love or desire of and complaisance in one's personal excellence.[14] It is not only an incentive to sin like other vices, but it is destructive of every virtue.[15] Lust, gluttony, belong to the sensual appetites; sloth belongs to the sensual appetites and to the passions of the soul; but pride, avarice, anger and envy belong mainly to the passions. Nevertheless we can easily understand from the explanations already given, that the passions of the soul usually co-operate with violent sensual appetites, or if they are opposed to them, they necessarily remain weak or indifferent; for with our determined and energetic opposition to the desires of the flesh, words, deeds or omissions could not be voluntary and sinful. Hence we see many reasons why we should earnestly strive to subdue the passions and bring them under the empire of sound reason and a well regulated will.

III. The following are the principal means we should employ in conquering our passions: 1. The first and safest means to keep the passions under control is to vigorously repress them as soon as they are felt, and to combat them by an act of a virtue opposed to them. If you are displeased at a remark made by anyone, allow not that the displeasure should grow into anger, and from anger into hatred; but say from the heart: My Savior was reviled and He reviled not; can I not suffer patiently this trifling annoyance? My sweet Jesus, do Thou reward the person who unknowingly has given me an opportunity to imitate Thee. If you feel like rejoicing at a misfortune that has befallen one who dislikes you or has angered you, repress the incipient pleasure, for Jesus wills

[12] Gal. v. 24. [13] 1. 2 q. 84 a. 4. [14] 2. 2. q. 162 a. 2.
[15] St. Augustin, Ep. 211.

that we should weep with those that weep, and then strive to change the first movement of joy into sadness and compassion. Thus we overcome the sentiments of pride and self-love by those of humility and contempt of self; sadness because of a great misfortune, by patience; anger by meekness; the desire of a forbidden pleasure by fleeing the occasion thereof, and by a sincere prayer that the good Lord may send us trials and sufferings which will smother the desire of a wicked enjoyment.

In like manner we should act with all the passions, being fully convinced of the necessity of acting energetically as soon as we are aware of their temptations. "Resist thy inclinations in the beginning," says the author of the *Imitation of Christ*, "and break off the evil habits, lest perhaps little by little, the difficulty increase upon thee," for "it is by resisting our passions that we are to find true peace of heart;" [16] because they grow weaker by our energetic resistance, and by the victories we have gained over their assaults. St. Ephrem compares our passions to a wound. "If you seek no remedy for your passions," he says, "they become an ulcer; and if you do not arrest their corruption, they will increase indefinitely and will corrupt the whole substance of your soul." [17]

St. Dorothy relates that an old monk, a holy and wise director, brought one day some religious to the edge of a cypress wood, and desiring to impress upon them the necessity of resisting their passions, as soon as they rise, he detailed one of his companions to uproot in succession some young trees of different sizes. He pointed first to one that had barely come out of the ground, and this one was torn up without difficulty; then he pointed to one with deeper roots and that one was also uprooted with one hand, but not without effort; when the young religious now came to a third tree which was shown him and which had deeper and stronger roots than the other two, he had to use both hands and all his strength, and when he tried to pull up the fourth tree, which had still deeper roots than the third, all his efforts to uproot it were vain. But few words from the

[16] Book 1, c. 11, c. 6.

[17] Serm. *de perf. Monac.*, vol. 2.

old and saintly monk were necessary to complete the efficiency of his practical demonstration and to show its application to our passions. Forsooth, our nascent passions are easily subdued; but the longer we refrain from mastering them, the greater the effort required to uproot them: if we allow them to arrive at their full growth and strength, then only a miracle of divine grace can bring them under the dominion of the human will. Note also that by resisting an evil inclination through an affection for a contrary virtue, you do violence to yourselves, and insure greater advancement in spiritual life, for "The greater violence thou offerest to thyself, the greater progress thou shalt make," says the author of the *Imitation*.[18]

Would to God that sad experience did not fully sustain the opportuneness of the warnings herein given! How many are there not who, not heeding the pressing need of combating the first assaults of a passion, before it has gained strength, have been overcome by it? Passions are fires that spread destruction, for, as he who possesses one perfect moral virtue, is perfect in all, so likewise he, who has been successfully attacked by one vicious passion, is most likely to become the victim of others; and the reason of it is, that the resistance of the will having been weakened or broken in one battle, it cannot be depended upon in any strenuous opposition to any other evil inclination. The devil is too cunning to begin by inciting the timid and pious soul to a shameful vice, but he suggests at first an evil thought or injects into the imagination an evil picture or scene; if, as soon as the intellect detects the evil tendency of the thought or representation, the will promptly abhors it, the combat will be short and decisive, and the victory will be easily won; but if on another occasion, a slight affection is felt for a person of another sex, unless it be promptly abominated as detestable in God's eyes, and highly detrimental to our spiritual welfare, it grows quickly into an impure love and the consent to it may be the downfall of one victim, if not of two; and so it is with all the other passions. Hatred with its train of many crimes has its beginning in a feeling of jealousy, envy or anger; adultery, fornication and similar

[18] Book 1, ch. 25, v. 11.

vices, in impure representations or in a slight affection considered at first innocent and excusable; theft, in a desire of greater comfort or of pleasure and amusements; gluttony or intemperance, in the use of food or drink, because of the sole pleasurable sensation it produces to the taste; unbelief and indifference to one's salvation, in the slothful observance of one's Christian duties; and final impenitence or despair, in a doubt or a diffidence of God's goodness.

2. Although we may overcome any passion with God's grace, we should still bear in mind that subdued passions are not dead; they spring up again, or, as St. Bernard expresses it: "The vices which have been retrenched, sprout again; temptations that have been removed, come back again; the passions that have been repressed, rise again, and those that were only asleep, revive." [19] Constant efforts, as explained above, will weaken the passions, but we can never fully extirpate them. With some people the passions have become a second nature, and then, it is well nigh impossible to overcome them; and again there are passions common to every human being, such as the love of well-being, which only circumstances or the end in view make for good or evil. Therefore the masters of spiritual life have prescribed in some cases a different remedy, not with a view to abandoning altogether the first, but with a view to utilizing both. Cassian will explain our meaning: "We cannot repress nor uproot from the soul the desire of temporal goods, unless we substitute salutary affections for those that are sensual and that we wish to retrench. For our soul cannot live without experiencing natural sentiments of love or of fear, of joy or of sadness, unless we supernaturalize them by directing them towards God. Thus, to extirpate the carnal desires of our heart, we must replace them with spiritual aspirations, so that our soul, constantly occupied with those holy affections, finds always where to place its inclinations and to despise the allurements of the passing pleasures of the present life." [20] Without abandoning the strong determination to suppress the violence of our passions, as soon as we become conscious of their malign tendencies, it is often more expedient to direct their energies towards an object worthy of our

[19] In Cant., Serm. 58. [20] Collat. xii, c. 5.

strongest affection. A violent passion, when repressed by the will, is like expansive gas compressed in a metallic vessel, which may burst at the moment the pressure becomes somewhat stronger, as for instance through heat; for anything that irritates a violent passion may cause it to break loose from the will, and that spells ruin to the soul; but as, by opening a slight vent in the metallic vessel, you could allow some explosive gas to escape in order to diminish the tension, act likewise with the passions in question. Direct the unsubdued energies towards another object, that, by so doing, an affection at first vicious may become agreeable to God and meritorious for heaven. As we remarked already, some passions are not easily subdued, such as the passion of love from which all others flow; if one feels too much affection for persons or things which may become dangerous, like the attachments to worldly things, riches, honors, pleasures or even a too great attachment to parents or relatives, draw the passion away from their object and turn it to the love of God, the superabundant glory and the unlimited wealth of heaven, the eternal and incomprehensible delight of living in company with God, with His angels and His saints. Thus we can change hatred of neighbor, into hatred of sin and of Satan, who envies what is good in us; sadness, because of misfortune through the loss of fortune, friends or relatives, into sorrow and compunction of heart for our sins which offend God; fear of temporal evils, into the fear of eternal punishment merited by our sins, and so on with all other vicious passions. True, this remedy of overcoming a passion by changing the object thereof, is not in itself available to all, nor easy of execution, because sensual things have more power over the faculties of the soul's understanding, memory, imagination and will, than the invisible things of God and all abstract imaginations which relate to them. Still we can succeed by meditation, prayer and other spiritual exercises, but mainly by daily or frequent Communion, until we become so imbued with the vileness of all transitory things and with the absolute importance of all that relates to our eternal destiny, that we finally love all things that lead to God and eternal happiness, hate all that might prevent us from reaching our goal, and consider as vain nugacities

and despicable futilities, the things that neither lead to God nor tend toward union with Him.

3. We have now learned the absolute necessity of combating our passions and of striving to subdue them, by either of the two ways explained above; but we must also be fully convinced that the warfare against them can only cease with our last breath, for we must die fighting to gain the palm of victory, and he who ceases to fight is lost. But some order is required in combating the enemies of our salvation; strategy is often required and one of these we learn from the ruses of the devil, who attacks us on the weakest point of our defense. "That enemy of our salvation," says St. Gregory, "examines first the habits of men and the passions to which they are most addicted; thereafter he offers what he knows must draw more easily their will; thus, to those who are of a sensitive disposition or of a jovial nature, he first proposes luxury, and always adds vainglory, whilst he incites to anger, pride and cruelty those who have a harsh and disagreeable disposition. He lays his snares whither he knows the inclinations of the soul tend; he causes the danger to spring up were one's natural inclination will come to the aid of the temptation." [21] Our stratagem is to fortify the weakest point, for our wily enemy is sure to attack the vice to which our most violent passion inclines us, and that passion is already in itself the most dangerous and formidable enemy to our salvation; for the attacks of the enemy consist mainly in causing the passion to spring up, and as far as he can, to increase its violence, by artfully injecting into the imagination what may tend to it. Our weakest point of defense, is thus our strongest and most persistent passion, the passion that is subdued with great difficulty and which in spite of our resistance, has inflicted the deepest wound in the soul, and therefore, it is called dominant passion. Our besetting sin, that is, the sin of which we are most frequently guilty, will usually disclose the predominant passion; for although a besetting sin may originate in the sensual appetites, as intemperance for instance, then the appetite for intoxicants must have forced an alliance with the passion of love, which influences the

[21] Moral. L., 14, c. 7.

will to satisfy the craving of the body: this self-love or the passion of the soul for its mate will not enkindle the desire for strong drink, but it cannot resist the temptation, when the body craves it, and thus the craving of intoxicants, which had its source in a sensual appetite, becomes through indulgence one of the passions of the soul; then the joy of the soul will coincide with the hilarity and mirth of the satiated body, and hence we see how evil habits have their counterpart in the soul, which readily allies with the unsubdued desires of the flesh.

The means to combat the predominant passion is well explained by Cassian: "So that each one may destroy all the vices by which he is infected, he must find out the one that causes the greatest ravages in his heart with the intention of directing against it his principal attacks, of waging war against it and of persecuting it with all the energy and solicitude of his soul. When he will feel himself freed from that passion, he will have to run through the secret recesses of his heart to examine which is the most violent of the passions that remain unsubdued, with the intention of attacking it also with all the strength and all the courage with which he is endowed." [22]

This method of overcoming all our passions by subduing the most violent one first, and when that one is vanquished, by attacking a second and a third until all are mastered, is the most practical of all, and the masters of spiritual life as well as the saints, have unanimously adopted and counseled it. As we have spoken at length on the subject, when the particular examen was under consideration, it is unnecessary to dwell longer on it here.

4. When we have fully determined to subdue, as far as we can, all our passions by choosing for our first effort our dominant passion or besetting sin, it is of the utmost importance that we should direct towards the latter all our spiritual exercises and chiefly our special examination of conscience, which we should never omit, not even for a day. There can be no truce with the enemies of our spiritual progress, for the passions and concupiscence of the flesh may be slumbering, but they will lift up their virulent heads

[22] Collat. v., c. 14.

again, as soon as we cease our attacks. Hence we see the necessity of pursuing and persecuting our vicious appetites and of arming ourselves against them by devising new or more powerful weapons for the warfare we wage with them. This should be done during spiritual reading or during meditation. We shall be helped thereto by greater vigilance, by an ever increasing hatred and abomination of the ravages our evil inclinations cause, and by fortifying ourselves against them by prayer, by the grace of the sacraments and by our daily devotions.

Many aim to keep up their unceasing vigilance in the daily examination of conscience, but they neglect to make their dominant passion a subject for their special examen, and what is still more to be deplored, they neglect to confess the slight offenses which originate in their dominant passion; for in order to make our vigilance truly effective, not only the smallest sin of the same origin, but even the temptations to the sin should be mentioned in confession.

If we were asked why so much stress is laid on the necessity of mortifying our vicious affections and evil inclinations, as well as the concupiscence of the flesh, we will answer that they prevent the practice of the moral virtues, on which lively faith, firm hope and ardent charity depend; for the moral virtues together with the three divine virtues are indispensable to arrive at our union with God. How can virtues remain in the soul, if the vices opposed to them have taken possession of the heart? Darkness is incompatible with light and so is vice with virtue: to become truly virtuous, we must banish vice and vicious affections from the heart and nothing should remain of them, neither in the mind nor in the heart, but the horror and hatred of these insidious enemies of our salvation.

ARTICLE III

The Love of Riches an Obstacle to Perfection

I. The Love of Riches Causes Three Torments to the Soul—Pagans Have Despised Riches—Sins Which the Inordinate Love of Riches Occasions—II. Remedies: Poverty of Spirit—Means by Which One Can Judge if He is Attached to Riches—True Detachment—III. The Vow of Poverty—Three Considerations to Obtain the Poverty of Spirit—Remarks.

I. We have now considered the passions of the soul in themselves and their effects upon the soul's most noble faculties, the intellect and will, and now it behooves us to examine what influences exterior things have over them, that we may thereby still better understand the dangerous tendency of our vitiated nature.

The love of riches is one of the obstacles to perfection, for "The desire to acquire and preserve temporal goods is a poison unto charity," says St. Augustine. Why should it prove so? For three reasons. "The insatiable love for riches disquiets the mind more through the desire of them, than it gratifies the soul through their use; for in their acquisition, there is labor; in their possession fear and their loss is bound to be filled with sadness." [1] Our Savior Himself alludes to the torments which the love of riches inflicts upon the soul, when He speaks of the good seed that fell among thorns: "And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it and it yielded no fruit." [2] Why refer to the heart of man in which the good seed is sown, as a thorny field, unless He wished to inculcate that riches and other excessive cares are like thorns that sting and torment the soul, as His explanation of the parable fully proves. [3]

Although all excessive love for wealth brings about much

[1] St. Bernard, L. *de Conv. ad Cler.*, c. 8.

[2] Mark iv. 7. [3] *Loc. cit.*, xix.

anxiety to the soul, to wit: great labor of mind in its acquisition, fear of losing it and sadness of the heart when it is lost, we should not extend these evil effects to the moderate love and desire of acquiring a sufficient fortune for one's future necessity and for the comfortable sustenance of one's family. It is the inordinate love for wealth that is condemned for the frantic desire of accumulating to the detriment of honesty and charity.

There have been even Pagans, who considered virtue incompatible with the acquisition and possession of riches. St. Jerome relates that "Crates throwing a considerable weight of gold into the sea, uttered these words: Begone, accursed cupidity; I drown thee lest thou drown me." [4] The holy Doctor explains this singular conduct of the philosopher, by saying that "It was because he could not possess virtue and riches at the same time." [5]

St. Paul attributes the loss of many souls to the desire of earthly riches: "They that will become rich," he says, "fall into temptation and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition, for the desire of money is the root of all evil, and some who have coveted it, have erred from the faith." [6] We might ask what there is in common between avarice and faith. St. Ambrose explains it as follows: "The root of all evil is cupidity; therefore some who have given way to it, have deviated from the faith. You see, that he who has money loses the faith and he who gathers gold, dissipates the faith. Avarice is a blindness that precipitates us into many errors regarding religion. It is blind and in its fraudulous calculations it puts a bandage on the intellect; it sees not the beauty of celestial things, but it understands all too well the interest of its cupidity." [7]

We deem it unnecessary to mention in detail all the evil consequences of avarice. The love of wealth often originates in the heart of the wicked to satisfy their degrading passions, and principally their voluptuousness or their insatiable ambition; for money can buy the means to satisfy all their vicious appetites, or as Ecclesiastes expressess it: "All

[4] *Contra. Jov.*, L. 2.
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] 1 Tim. vi.; ix. 10.
[7] Serm. lix., *de Avaritia.*

things obey money."[8] Holy Scripture again teaches us that "Nothing is more wicked than the covetous man. There is not a more wicked thing than to love money, for such a one setteth even his own soul for sale."[9] By this we understand that he who covets riches will sacrifice anything for their acquisition: his friends, his honor, his reputation, his family, his faith, yea, he will even barter his own soul for gold; for avarice produces hardness of heart and all admonitions, all inspirations from on high are like a good seed that falls on stony ground.[10] From it proceed indifference to our neighbor's wants and interests, oppression of the poor and of the laborer, law-suits, perjury and even murder. What fearful crimes has the sordid wretch not committed to increase his wealth! Who can enumerate the deeds of iniquity for which gold has furnished the occasion? Hence the threat hurled against them who have amassed a fortune: "Woe to you that are rich," says Our Lord, "for you have your consolation."[11] Terrible words, issued from the mouth of the Judge of the living and the dead. What can the rich expect who find their consolation and their contentment in the fulfilment of their wicked desires upon earth, but the fearful sentence on the last day: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire....for I was hungry and you gave Me not to eat. I was thirsty and you gave Me not to drink."?[12] Is this perhaps an extreme view, a possible exaggeration? Far from it, for the Savior expresses more clearly and with more emphasis, if possible, the unhappy lot of the rich after this present life, when He remarked to His disciples: "Amen I say to you, that the rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven... It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven."[13]

Let us remark that love of riches is not a vice restricted to the wealthy only; for, as poverty of spirit is not a virtue exclusively proper to the poor, the indigent can also sin by coveting the riches they despair ever to possess. We find even covetousness among religious who have made the vow

[8] Eccle. x. 19. [9] Eccli. x. 9, 10. [10] Matt. xiii. 5.
[11] Luke vi. 24. [12] Matt. xxv. 31. [13] Matt. xix. 23, 24.

of poverty and especially among them who are in charge of the temporalities in religious institutions. The plea that they are coveting worldly goods not for themselves, but for the welfare of the community, will not be acceptable to God, for as people in the world, if they associate together for commercial and industrial enterprises, with a view to amassing great wealth, fall under Christ's condemnation as well as the single merchant or manufacturer who hoards up much gold, likewise religious who covet wealth for their order or institute are equally worthy of condemnation. Extensive holdings, large estates and sumptuous edifices have often directly caused the relaxation of discipline and of the vows in some religious communities, as their history clearly attests, and the same danger may even extend to wealthy parishes, colleges and other institutions of learning. It is true that this remark is hardly applicable to the present condition of the Church in the United States, where the necessity of maintaining churches, schools and charitable institutions are such that the incomes of many institutions and of nearly all parishes are not adequate to their need; but wealth is rapidly accumulating in the centres of industry and commerce, and vigilance will then be required that wealth may not become a hindrance to the clergy, to religious institutes and to monastic orders as well as to the Church at large. It is a most welcome sign of God's kind predilection for our glorious country that lately more interest has been shown in foreign and domestic missions among heretics, infidels and heathens, and it is to be hoped that the surplus income of all Catholic institutions, instead of being spent in useless extravagances, will be utilized for the most pious and the most noble of all charitable work of mercy, the spread of God's kingdom upon earth.

II. The main remedy for covetousness, to which all other means that may be proposed, must necessarily tend, is the spirit of poverty or detachment of the soul from all worldly goods. The world upholds riches as a great boon, the door to all earthly enjoyments, and Jesus our Savior, who condemns the wicked maxims of the world and particularly its cupidity, proclaims as blessed or especially favored by His Father, the poor in spirit; for among the Beati-

tudes we find the following: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." [14] To have a full understanding of what the poverty of spirit means, we should bear in mind that earthly goods are not evil in themselves, for they were given us by the Creator for the preservation of our natural life, and hence it is not sinful to desire what God intended as a necessity of our nature, at least after the fall of Adam and Eve; for God said to Adam: "Cursed is the earth in thy work; with labor and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life.... In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread." [15] The desire of what is not absolutely necessary for our maintenance and our condition in life alone is condemned,[16] and besides, we should not be too solicitous about the necessities of life, for the Savior has warned us against it: "Therefore I say to you," says the Divine Master, "be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on." [17] From this we understand that detachment of the heart from all earthly possessions, even from those things that are useful or necessary, is proposed to us, as the principal means to combat that cupidity in which all evils have their source. This indifference to worldly possessions can exist in the midst of opulence, as cupidity may exist in the heart of the beggar and of religious who possess nothing which they may call their own. Let a master spirit explain more clearly our mind: St. Augustine speaking on what St. Peter had left behind to follow Our Lord, says: "He has abandoned much, he has sacrificed much. And what has he abandoned? He has abandoned not only what he had but also what he desired to possess. For who is the poor man who is not filled with the hope of having one day the goods of this world? Who desires not to increase every day those he possesses? Thus the Apostle Peter has cut off that cupidity from his heart." [18]

Other Doctors of the Church and masters of spiritual life have taught us that avidity for earthly possessions consists in an affection for or inclination towards earthly goods, no matter how trivial they may be, and that it is necessary

[14] Matt. v. 3. [15] Gen. iii. 17, 18. [16] St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 118 a. 1.
[17] Matt. vi. 25 *seq.* [18] Serm. 3 in Ps. cxxiii.

to suppress that passion, if we desire to be free from its contamination. This vice of cupidity is not always easily detected, because the affection for worldly goods is not like the passions of lust, anger, hatred and revenge, which are accompanied by exterior manifestations, by words or deeds, that are difficult to hide, unless one be so avaricious that all his thoughts, his desires, as well as his exterior actions, yea his whole life tend to nothing else than to amassing wealth. Most often the passion of cupidity is insidiously inimical and can only be detected when the unexpected happens, such as the failure in an enterprise, the loss of something more or less valuable by accident, by fire, theft, drought, inundations or such like. If anyone feels unusually elated over successes or feels sad or despondent over reverses, or exerts himself more than it behooves in preserving what he possesses or in increasing it, the insidious passion is lurking in his breast. Again, when one is unusually occupied with business transactions and frequently revolves in his mind the means of success or ordinarily makes them the topic of conversation with his acquaintances, or often dwells with others in his colloquies on times and circumstances which improve or diminish the chances of a prosperous trade, commerce or industry, it is evident that the mind thus occupied denotes and lays bare a heart attached to earthly goods.

III. It must be conceded that a husband or a father of a family is in duty bound to look after his interest and the interest of those who depend on him, but both must be ready at all times to sacrifice their goods or so much thereof as is necessary, if religion, charity or the will of God should clearly demand it. No one should so eagerly attach his heart to riches that he is unwilling to abandon them, if a motive superior to his future comfort or to family welfare impose it. Abraham was ordered by God to offer up his only son Isaac as a holocaust, how much more should we be willing to suffer the loss of all our earthly possessions, as the holy man Job did, if it be God's holy will. The rich should not complain nor give way to sadness or despondency, when misfortunes befall them; but let them rather say with the same holy man Job: "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; as it hath pleased the Lord so is it done. Blessed be

the name of the Lord." [19] Neither should the rich have such an affection for their worldly goods that they neglect thereby their duties to the poor and their religious obligations, and deny through niggardliness their full share for the upkeep of the divine worship, for the maintenance of the parochial clergy and of the parish school, as well as of all the charitable institutions of their neighborhood; for a rich man who refuses to contribute according to his means to those worthy objects, proves but too clearly that his heart is attached to his perishable goods, and he should seriously ponder over Our Lord's saying that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into heaven.

On the other hand, a rich man who is willing to sacrifice all he possesses, if God should demand it of him, and is liberal according to his means toward the Church and the poor, is blameless, although he be as opulent as Cresus, provided his wealth be honestly acquired; and to him can be better applied the consoling Beatitude: "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," than to a religious who has an affection for certain things that are given him for his use, or who prides himself that he lives in a monastery that surpasses in grandeur the humble convent of cloistered nuns nearby, or who with other religious strives to enrich the community to which he belongs, whilst pleading with his own conscience that the riches he seeks is not for himself, but for his holy order! Oh! How much affection for earthly things is often hidden under a coarse and threadbare habit!

As to the rich who have no one dependent on them, if they wish to strive for perfection, we can only tell them what our Savior said to the rich young man, who had asked Him what good he must do to obtain eternal life: "If thou wilt be perfect," remarked the amiable Jesus, "go sell what thou hast, and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, follow Me." [20] This doctrine, the disciples of the Master understood well; this the earthly Christians carried out to perfection, for they sold their belongings and laid the price thereof at the feet of the

[19] Job i. 21. [20] Matt. xix. 21.

Apostles. "For the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that aught of the things he possessed, was his own, but all things were common unto them." [21]

IV. To obtain that perfect spirit of poverty of which we have just spoken, the help of God is absolutely indispensable, and prayer and meditation are the keys that will open the heavenly treasure of graces, which will flow in abundance on them who desire to live a life of perfection. It is difficult for some people to detach their heart from all worldly goods, but "Ask and you shall receive." To earnest and devout prayer we should add the following considerations, in order that we may entirely wean our hearts from all earthly possessions, which for many have been an occasion of perdition.

1. "The desire of money is the root of all evil, and by coveting it, some have erred from the faith and have entangled themselves in many sorrows," [22] and, as we have seen, it is next to impossible for a rich man to enter into heaven. God alone can work such a miracle.

2. We should frequently meditate on the voluntary poverty of our Redeemer, who although infinitely rich, has willed to become poor for our sake, that He might enrich us by His poverty, that is, merit for us heavenly riches and the joys of the celestial kingdom, which alone are worth our earnest desire. St. Paul concisely expresses the consoling truth, when he points to the benefits that accrue to us through the Savior's poverty: "Being rich, He became poor for your sake that through His poverty you might be rich." [23] In all truth the Redeemer says: "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." [24] How literally this was fulfilled when, naked, He died on the cross, and could not rest His aching head for fear of increasing His pain because of His thorny crown!

3. We should also seriously consider how quickly through private reverses and public calamities riches may be lost and that want may suddenly succeed to opulence and affluence;

[21] Acts iv. 32. [22] 1 Tim. vi. 10.
[23] 2 Cor. viii. 9. [24] Matt. viii. 20. *Cfr.* Luke iv. 58.

but it is most important that we should reflect on the certainty that our days upon earth are counted, and that soon, perhaps very soon, we must depart hence without taking with us anything of the goods to which our hearts may be attached. What will become of the rich man's money and property? Most likely they will pass into the hands of ungrateful heirs, who may quarrel over their division, or spend them, like many prodigal sons, unto their perdition and that of others. As to the dead man, it matters not, his riches are lost, unless by his liberality to the poor he made them the treasurers of his meritorious charities, for the Supreme Judge will accept as done to Himself all deeds of mercy. "The treasure of heaven is the hand of the poor man;" says St. Peter Chrysologus, "what he receives he deposits it in heaven, that it may not perish on earth. The hand of the poor is Christ's treasure-vault, for whatever the poor man receives, Christ accepts it. Give then, O man, land to the poor man that you may receive heaven; give a coin to receive a kingdom; give to the poor man, that he may give to thee; whatever thou givest to the poor, thou shalt still have and whatever thou givest not to the poor, another shall have it." [25]

[25] St. Peter Chrysologus, *de Jejun.*, serm. 8.

ARTICLE IV

Presumption, Ambition and Vainglory as Obstacles to Perfection

Honor, Praise and Glory—Presumption, Ambition and Vainglory—I. Presumption—II. Vainglory is a Most Insidious Enemy to All Virtue—III. Means to Overcome Ambition and Vainglory: 1. Consider Carefully Their Evil Consequences—2. Meditation and Prayer—3. Have a Pure Intention by Doing All Things for the Honor and Glory of God—4. To Hide One's Virtues and Advantages.

All dignities, says St. Thomas, confer a certain authority or privilege, and to all dignity and authority honor is due: "Honor denotes respect exhibited for any one in testimony of his excellence," [1] and he also teaches that praise and glory differ from honor; for praise always consists in words only, and glory is the effect produced by honor or praise, for, "The goodness of a man," says the Angelic Doctor, "is known to many through the honor exhibited to him and the praises bestowed upon him, and this tends to his glory." [2]

The passion for honors and glory is an insidious enemy and unless subdued, it makes spiritual progress impossible and, besides, it may lead to dreadful consequences. Let us first see how the passion originates, and which are its concomitant vices or vicious sisters. We have already named the seven capital sins of which pride is, as it were, the queen, as it leads all the others in its train. Pride, according to St. Thomas, is an inordinate appetite of one's excellence, [3] and the proud are named by St. Paul among those who are worthy of death. [4] The Holy Ghost says that "Pride is the beginning of all sins," [5] and the wickedness of the vice is shown by its tendency, for "The beginning of the pride of man is to fall off from God;" [6] and why? For no other

[1] 2. 2. q. 103 to 3. [2] *Ibid.* [3] 1. 2. q. 84 a. 4.
[4] Rom. i. 30, 32. [5] Eccli. x. 15. [6] *Loc. cit.*, xiv.

reason than that the proud man's heart, through self-love, turns away from the God who made him, as we learn from this text of Holy Scripture. Now presumption, ambition and vainglory are the principal daughters of that most dangerous vice, which as St. Augustine remarks, "cannot remain sterile, but the wicked mother continually brings forth wherever she may be" and she often begets children more wicked than herself.

I. Presumption is an inordinate desire to do what surpasses one's strength or ability. Sound reason condemns it, for to undertake anything of which one is not capable may tend to his own or his neighbor's detriment. Presumption, in a strict, or theological, sense of the word, is an inordinate or rash expectation of salvation without resorting to indispensable means to attain it, or, as theologians define it: it is an inordinate expectation of salvation and of the means leading to it.[7] Presumption is called a sin against the Holy Ghost for he, who is guilty of it, expects to reach heaven without merit and pardon without sorrow for his sins, which is contrary to the teachings of the Spirit of truth.[8] In this Manual we follow the most comprehensive definition of the generally accepted meaning of the word.

Presumption is frequently rebuked in Holy Writ. It is called wicked in the Book of Proverbs: "He that trusteth in his own devices doth wickedly."[9] It is also called a folly: "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool."[10] "Seek not to be made a judge unless thou have strength enough to extirpate iniquity" and "Lest thou fear the person of the powerful,"[11] for a judge must be a man of integrity and deal justly with the rich and the poor. The presumptuous also contradict the words of the Savior: "Without Me you can do nothing."[12]

Diffidence of ourselves and confidence in God should be the watchword of the Christian. It is a practical adage which many have neglected, to their great detriment. St. Peter swore that he would remain faithful to his Master even unto death and he denied Him thrice that very night. "If Peter

[7] St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 21 a. 4. [8] *Ibid.* [9] Prov. xii. 2.
[10] *Ibid.*, xxviii. 26. [11] Eccli. vii. 6. [12] John xv. 5.

fell and fell so low, who would not tremble at seeing this pillar fall? If Peter sinned, who would presume on his own strength?" [13]

We are guilty of presumption if we desire or seek a dignity or position, the obligations of which we do not understand, for then we cannot know our fitness for it. This was the presumption for which James and John, the sons of Zebedee were mildly rebuked by Our Lord, when they asked that one might sit on His right and the other on His left in His glory. Jesus said to them: "You know not what you ask." [14] We are also guilty of presumption if we seek or undertake an office of trust or responsibility for which, according to our judgment, we do not possess the necessary qualities. He that knowingly seeks a calling for which he is not fit, not only sins against the virtue of humility, but also against charity or justice, if he foresees the harm he may do to himself or to his neighbor, because of his inability. It is presumptuous to expect with certainty, as due to our merits, favors from God, for we are warned not to say: "God will have respect to the multitude of my gifts and when I offer to the Most High, He will accept my offering." [15] It is presumptuous to pretend to advise others in matters of importance, relying on one's natural judgment, without sufficient learning and experience. It is presumptuous to decide offhand any controversy or difficult question without studying and examining it thoroughly. It is presumption, if, relying only on our natural talents, we expect to succeed in any undertaking without due regard to our incapacities, weakness or unpreparedness. It is presumption to expect from God's goodness the graces of salvation without recourse to the means of grace and to the practice of the virtues of our state of life. One is guilty of presumption if he remains in the state of sin or leads a disorderly or careless life, and confides in himself that later on he will repent and lead an exemplary life; but the most wicked of all presumptions is to rely on God's goodness and to make it a reason to sin without remorse and without fear of God's judgment. St. Thomas has the following on this most dread-

[13] St. Bern. *De Coena. Dom.*, Serm. 6.

[14] Mark x. 38 *seq.* [15] Eccli. vii. 11

ful vice: "It must be said that to sin with the resolve of persevering in sin, because of the hope of forgiveness, belongs to presumption." [16] This is properly the sin against the Holy Ghost and all the other sins constitute presumption but in a wider sense.

Presumption, although a most dangerous vice, because of our self-love and self-esteem (and therefore it is seldom free from guilt), is not necessarily evil in itself. We will presently see that ambition is not always a vice, for we may aspire to an honor, if we do not unduly prevent another more worthy from obtaining it, and hence if one presumes upon real ability to obtain a coveted prize, he is free from blame. Thus also one may presume upon his punctuality, attention to business and devotedness to his master's interest for a promotion or for an increase of salary. Do we not presume upon our virtuous deeds for greater graces from God? He has promised salvation to them who do His holy will, may we not, or rather are we not bound to presume that the keeping of the Commandments will insure our salvation? To think otherwise would be to deny God's fidelity to His promises. It is true that it would be presumptuous and sinful to rely upon our own strength in keeping the Commandments of God, and therefore we pray with humility to obtain His necessary aid; and the greater confidence we have in His promises, the greater shall be the help we will receive.

A certain presumption—call it confidence in one's self, if the word seems more suitable—may become obligatory; let us suppose that a religious community needs a person for a certain dignity or position of honor or trust: any one may strive for the office, yea, it is a duty, if by great efforts one may become fit to undertake it; but a religious must mainly have in view God's honor and glory and his neighbor's spiritual welfare as well as his own; nor is he allowed to attribute his success to himself, for "Our sufficiency comes from God." [17]

A religious may also be called to a charge or task for which he considers himself unfit. He may try to disabuse his superior, if he has good reason to think that a too favorable

[16] 2. 2. q. 21 a. 2 to 2. [17] 2 Cor. iii. 5.

opinion of his ability may have been the cause of the superior's order; but if the latter insist, the candidate can do nothing else than to employ all the strength and all the energies of which he is capable, to worthily undertake the task. Thus he presumes upon his efforts and the help from on high, to fill with dignity and honor the position, to which he was assigned. If he refuses, he would be guilty of disobedience, of pusillanimity and would deserve to be branded as a coward.

II. Honor is due to any one because of his excellence or superiority. Thus we honor God with a supreme honor, because of His supreme excellence and infinite perfection. He demands that we honor also all those who partake of His excellence, either through superiority proper to each individual or through the authority, dignity or power they have received from God. Thus we honor the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of the Redeemer, the angels and saints as ministers and friends of God; we honor also our ecclesiastical superiors and dignitaries of the Church; also kings and all civil magistrates and we are principally commanded to honor our father and our mother. That all those who are constituted in authority should be honored, as God's representatives, is clearly laid down in Holy Writ. Solomon in his book of Proverbs speaking in the name of infinite Wisdom, says: "By Me kings reign and law-givers decree just things. By Me princes rule and the mighty decree justice." [18] Honor depends not solely on the inferiority of one person with respect to another, for even a superior should honor the excellence of his inferior, although the latter may owe his dignity or authority to the former: thus if a servant complies faithfully with his duties towards his master, he has an excellence proper to his state. With more reason still should equals honor one another, and this is especially the duty of Christians, as members of the mystical body of Christ, a distinction and a prerogative far superior to a mere human dignity. We are indeed many, but notwithstanding, "We being many are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another." [19] In the eyes of God neither power nor authority counts, unless it be employed in His service, and

[18] Prov. viii. 15. [19] Rom. xii. 5.

Christians should seek no other distinction than that of a holy and virtuous life. As followers of the lowly and meek Savior, we are commanded to honor our equals, who "Hating that what is evil and cleaving to that which is good," show themselves to be disciples of Christ and living members of His mystical body. Then, "By loving one another with the charity of brotherhood, with honor preventing (anticipating) one another," we serve God, and fulfill His holy law.[20] Thus we comply with the injunction of the Apostle, who teaches us to give every man his due: "Render to all men therefore their due...honor to whom honor."[21] We conclude from the above principles that it is a virtuous action to show respect to all civil and ecclesiastical superiors and to all those who have authority over others, provided we aim thereby to honor God, from whom all authority is derived, as "There is no power but from God and those that are, are ordained by God."[22] We learn also from the same principles that they who are constituted in authority are blameless, if they require suitable deference and respect from their inferiors, but they should also refer all the exterior marks of respect received from inferiors to God, to whom they owe whatever dignity or excellence they enjoy, for it was only conferred on them for the greater glory of their Maker's name and for the spiritual or temporal welfare of those over whom they are placed.

Ambition, to be vicious and sinful, must be inordinate, and it is such, if the desire of preferment, honor, superiority, dignity or power is too eager or exceeds the just measure; for we may say of all honorable states of pre-eminence and superiority, to which one may be called, what St. Paul says of the episcopate: "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work,"[23] but the candidate must have the necessary qualities for the office he seeks, for otherwise he falls into the vice of presumption. This is clearly inculcated by the same Apostle when he enumerates the qualities of a bishop, priest and deacon.[24] For the priesthood one must besides be called thereto by God or have a true vocation, and this is also required for the religious life. If any one should feel himself called to any

[20] Rom. x. 9, 10. [21] Rom. xiii. 7. [22] Rom. xiii. 1. [23] 1 Tim. iii. 1. [24] *Ibid.*

dignity or state of pre-eminence, but is in doubt as to whether or not he possesses the necessary piety, talents, learning and other indispensable qualities, and the vocation thereto, he may safely follow the will of his superiors and of his director. When one has accepted the position of trust, power or dignity, then it behooves him to seek, not the praises of men, but the glory of God and the salvation of his neighbor, so that he may thereby insure his own eternal welfare. "So let your light shine before men," says the Redeemer, "that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." [25]

St. Thomas teaches us in what manner the desire of honor becomes vicious and sinful. The love and desire of preferment are vitiated by falsely pretending to qualities one has not, in order to attract undeserved praises; also through pride, by attributing to one's self all the honor without referring it to God; and through egotism, by the desire to enjoy alone the acquired esteem without utilizing it for the good of one's neighbor." [26] From this we learn how insidious the passion of ambition is, as it perverts many good deeds, which from praiseworthy become contemptible, and from meritorious, sinful and damnable.

As to the material order, to attempt more than the mention of the frightful ravages caused in the world through the violent passion of ambition, would be out of place in this manual. The political and religious histories of peoples attest it and it is sufficiently known to our readers. It behooves us to show what destructive power ambition wields over the hearts of men and how it poisons the religious life of the soul. "Ambition," says St. Ambrose, "is so much the more dangerous, because it flatters one's self-love through the hope of dignity: hence it has often driven to crime those whom neither lust, nor avarice nor other vices have been able to subvert." [27] St. Cyprian makes the following reflection: "Ambition resides in the soul of priests; there it lies concealed in the shadow and fraudulously hides itself in the secret recesses of the heart." [28] No one has exhibited a deeper knowledge of the vice than St. Bernard: "Ambi-

[25] Matt. v. 16. [26] *Cfr.* St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 131 a. 1.

[27] L. 4 in Luke, c. 4. [28] Serm. *de Jejun. et Tentat.*

tion," he says, "is a subtle evil, a secret poison, a hidden pest, an inventor of stratagems, the rust of virtue, the leprosy of sanctity; a cruel passion, which blinds the heart, which changes remedies into maladies and medicines into poisons." [29]

Such is the warning sounded by the masters of spiritual life against the passion of ambition, so difficult to withstand that even saints have feared to be contaminated by it, and therefore have shunned as far as they conscientiously could, all dignities and positions of honor. We are moved and influenced by ambition, when we covet a more honorable state than the one we occupy, unless the will of God be manifested by being called thereto by a mandate of our legitimate superior; when we aspire to honors which are not clearly due us or insist with punctiliousness upon those that are customary; when we feel slighted or humiliated, if others are preferred to us by being promoted to a higher office; when we perform our duties, mainly with a view to being raised to a more honorable charge; when we seek the influence or good graces of others to reach our ambitious designs and whenever we aspire to arrive at perfection, not through the ordinary channels of grace, but through God's extraordinary and miraculous intervention.

III. Vainglory is an inordinate desire of the manifestation of one's excellence to others or to one's self alone.[30] The word desire includes the love or affection for, a complacency in the manifestation of one's excellence. From the manifestation of one's excellence or from the honor and praise bestowed on any one, glory ensues, and this glory is called vainglory if it be sought to gratify our innate pride, the source of all evil.

If we were asked what is the origin of vainglory, we would call it the eldest daughter of pride, for it is so clearly related to its parent, that it is hardly distinguishable from the parent stock, and like it, it becomes the fruitful mother of many vicious daughters. St. Gregory, among others, omits pride among the capital sins and places vainglory in its stead, making it the parent stock of all vices; but the more accepted view is that pride, although being the source of all

[29] In Ps. xc. [30] *Cfr.* St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 132 a. 1. c.

evil, needs the concurrent aid of other vices or evil appetites of the soul and of the body to produce the many specific sins which are committed by the human race. [31]

II. Vainglory is one of the most insidious and deceitful passions we have inherited from our first parents. Most of the vices are so hideous that they shock the good sense of an ordinary Christian and even of unbelievers, such as theft, calumny, perjury, cursing, drunkenness and impurity; but not so vainglory. There is a plausibility to it that makes it in the eyes of unthinking people reasonable and even proper. How many heroic deeds, how many glorious and merciful acts of self-sacrifice have been inspired by the love of honors, praise and glory! Even Holy Scripture seems to praise the desire of honors by showing what advantage there is in a good name: "A good name is better than precious ointment," [32] and hence it was much prized among the Jews. We are encouraged to strive for wisdom, and one of the recompenses thereof is honor, praise and glory: "A wise man shall be filled with blessings and they that see, shall praise him... A wise man shall inherit honor among his people and his name shall live forever... Many shall praise his wisdom and shall never be forgotten... The church shall show forth his praise. . ." [33] With what glory did God not surround Moses and Aaron? Our Savior Himself seems to invite His followers to seek honor as a recompense for good works, when He says to His disciples: "You are the light of the world... Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works." [34] But all the texts of the Old Testament only go to show that praise is due to good work and these are often rewarded by a good and glorious name upon earth; and as to the words of our Savior, the last sentence in the citation teaches us the end we should have in view in bringing our light before men, namely: "That they may glorify your Father Who is in heaven." [35] Our Blessed Lord clearly teaches us then that we should not seek glory upon earth: "I receive not glory from man," He said, "How can you believe, who receive glory one from another, and the glory which is from God

[31] *Cfr.* St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 132 a. 4, 5.

[32] Eccli. vii. 2. [33] Eccli. *passim.* [34] Matt. v. 14, 16. [35] *Ibid.*

alone you do not seek."[36] St. Paul tells us to beware of vainglory: "Let us not be made desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another."[37] Trials and tribulations should be our joy in this world, because of the glory that awaits us hereafter: "You shall greatly rejoice," writes St. Peter, "if now you must for a little time be sorrowful in divers temptations, that the trial of your faith (much more precious than gold which is tried by fire) may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the appearing of Jesus Christ," to wit, on the day of the general judgment.[38] Therefore St. Paul only gloried in his infirmities, that the power of Christ might dwell in him;[39] for if we glory in our nothingness, God operates in us miracles of grace. From all of which we conclude that no one who aspires to perfection, or desires to be rewarded by God, may seek praise and glory before men, for if he do, he receives his reward here, below. Vainglory, we are taught by the masters of spiritual life, is the vice to which souls that aspire to perfection, are most addicted, for their very virtues are occasions of sin, unless they can keep the knowledge of them from themselves, for which more than an ordinary humility is required.

There are men and women who glory in their evil deeds, but these are the outcasts of society, as they have lost all self-respect. There are also many honored citizens, who live good lives, and we may find among them a considerable number who perform many good works for the purpose of winning praise; but the ambition of worldlings in general is to amass great fortunes, great wealth, that will buy all that may suit their fancy, and whereas the love of riches is insatiable, it follows them to their last breath. On the other hand, the besetting sin of many of those who wish to live piously, to strive for perfection, is vainglory: it crops out in their conversation, in the duties they perform and even in their devotions: they glory in their talents, in their successes, in their observance of the rule, in their punctuality and even they pride themselves on the very progress they have made in virtue. Self-esteem is found in their thoughts, their desires, their affections, their words and their actions. "Great

[36] John v. 44 [37] Galat. v. 26. [38] 1 Peter i. 6. [39] 2 Cor. xii. 9.

sinners are not exposed to the attacks of vainglory," says St. Chrysostom, "how could it tempt fornicators and thieves, who have no reason to glory?" [40] As for pious souls, according to St. Jerome, vainglory is like a shadow that follows a man and runs with him no matter how fast he runs; it dogs him everywhere. "Even in solitude, pride lays snares for man: If the latter impose fasts upon himself, if he deprive himself of all intercourse with the world, vainglory makes him believe that he is very virtuous. [41]

The desire of honor, praise and glory manifests itself by the love and affection we have for those vanities, even when conscience tells us that we are unworthy of them, and also, if we use every kind of means to attract notice, in our dress, our walk, our gestures, and in our words and looks. We glory in our talents, in our family connections and acquaintances; even in the recesses of our heart we find something to glory about. If we lack some good qualities, we attribute it not to our own negligence, but to some influence for which we are not responsible, and at the same time we find some other asset, which more than repays for what we are deprived of. Thus we pride ourselves on what we have not, and in what we have received, we glory as if we had not received it. [42] Oh! how deceitful vainglory is! how full of hypocrisy! We blame ourselves so that others may praise our humility; we praise others to receive praise in return; we accuse ourselves when our faults are known, and we cannot hide them any longer; but we bring circumstances forward to attentuate our guilt, or we put the blame on the actions of others, that we may be judged innocent or less culpable.

But, some one may remark, if vainglory is so common that only great saints are free from it, it cannot be very sinful. It is true that vainglory in itself is not a mortal sin, but may we call it a slight offense when it robs us of all the fruit of our good works, or if not of the whole, at least of a part? It is a doctrine admitted by all theologians that any good work, done solely for the purpose of deriving thereby praise or glory among men, is totally lost and if the desire of glory enters at all in our designs, as when we are

[40] Hom. xv, in Matt. [41] *Epist. ad Rusticum.* [42] 1 Cor. iv. 7.

only half-conscious of it, it diminishes the merit of the most virtuous deed. Vainglory and self-esteem may thus be called the vanity of vanities or the fruitful mother of all vanities.

We should also bear in mind that vainglory is a passion, and the passion that conceals itself under a cloak of virtue, yea it hides itself under what is most opposed to it, namely: contempt of self; for every good deed is an occasion of glorifying ourselves in our own estimation, if not in the estimation of others. As a passion, it is a fire that consumes our best thoughts, words and actions, and it spreads continually unless it be subdued. Do you wish to know what conflagration it starts within ourselves as well as without? From vainglory or self-esteem there it but one step to presumption, for when we esteem ourselves unmeasurably, we think ourselves capable of what we are not. From the immoderate esteem of ourselves we seek esteem, honor, praise and glory from others. When we cannot confine the fire of vainglory within our hearts, we have recourse to jactation or boasting. From presumption, if it rests on false claims, especially when accompanied with bragging or pretense in action, hypocrisy is born. Vainglory loves also to manifest itself, and from the part of the intellect it shows itself by stubbornness in the defense of our opinion; from the part of the will, discord arises, contention in words, and finally disobedience, for at last vainglory has arrived at the point where neither our own will nor the will of others can subdue the conflagration, which the small spark of vainglory has ignited. [43]

IV. Remedies against vainglory, presumption and ambition.

We mainly intend to give the means to overcome the three vices, which are, as we said, the daughters of pride; but as presumption and ambition cannot exist without vainglory, we control and vanquish the other two by subduing the parent, vainglory.

1. The first means to subdue vainglory is prayer. Prayer is necessary to obtain any special favor from God, but here it is particularly imposed upon them who tend to holiness, as temptations to vainglory are very frequent and cannot be avoided. Therefore the words: lead us not into temptation,

[43] *Cfr.*, St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 132 a. 5.

have a particular meaning and are of an urgent necessity to those who follow the narrow path of perfection. Besides, pious and humble prayer is a manifestation of our helplessness, as we recognize thereby our inability to do the least thing tending to our spiritual welfare without the assistance of our heavenly Father, and thus the consciousness of our weakness stifless self-esteem and presumption.

2. The second means to successfully oppose vainglory consists in employing the proper remedy to smother the passion; but here we meet with a difficulty. We have learned to consider vainglory as a great evil and according to St. Chysostom, "All evils have their contraries, real goods that are opposed to them and that overcome them: chastity is opposed to impurity, humility to pride; meekness to anger. There is not an evil that cannot be fought by some good; vainglory alone has no antagonist. The more good you do to oppress it, the more occasion you give it to fortify itself. Forsooth, evil can only be begotten of evil, whilst vainglory is begotten of the good itself, which far from reducing it, only strengthens it. [44] There is, as the holy Doctor teaches, no named virtue that is in perfect opposition to vainglory, like humility to pride; but that does not mean that there is no virtuous deed that can combat the sneaking vice. We have defined vainglory an inordinate desire to manifest our excellence, either to others or to ourselves, that is, to our own judgment; this includes also love of, and complacency in our good qualities. We are not forbidden to have a knowledge of the good that there is in us, but what is wicked, is to glorify ourselves, as if the good we possess were due to our merits, or, as St. Paul says, we should not glory in what we have received, as if we had not received it. To give an example: We live and there is no harm to be fully aware that life is a boon; we may even rejoice in its possession, but who will ever esteem himself the more for it, as if life were due to his merits? A sensible man will thank his Maker for the inestimable favor, and instead of finding life a reason to glory, he will despise himself because he has made a bad use of the gift, by not utilizing that very life for the honor and glory of Him, who gave it. Now this is

[44] Hom. xv. in Matt.

likewise true of all the good qualities that go to make up the relative excellence of any one; it extends to our talents, to our condition of life, to the faculties of our body or soul, and above all to our vocation. Contempt and even hatred of self, if well understood, is one of the best means to counteract the inordinate love of self-esteem. Hence, since what we have received does not strictly belong to us, we must be willing to renounce all those things in which man often prides himself, if his God demands it of him, for "Every one of you that does not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be My disciple," says Our Lord.[45] Let us remember that these words were addressed to the Scribes and Pharisees, who outwardly appeared just to men, but inwardly were full of hypocrisy and iniquity.[46]

We come now to the second phase of vainglory, the love and desire of the esteem of others or of the manifestation of our excellence to seek thereby honor, praise and glory, which we are never allowed to desire; for it is robbing God of what belongs to Him and not to us, as is evident from the explanation already given; and therefore instead of seeking glory before men, because of our good qualities, we must endeavor to despise whatever honor, praise or glory may be bestowed upon us, except in so far as we can refer them to God; for all rulers, magistrates and dignitaries of all classes should accept the customary honor, not as bestowed upon themselves personally, but upon the Divine Majesty, for to It, as the Source of all good, all honor, all praises and glory is due.

3. A third means very practical to escape the danger of vainglory is to accustom ourselves to do all things for the honor and glory of God, and whenever a temptation of vainglory assails us, we should protest before Him that we are willing to be despised, reviled and looked upon as criminals, imitating in this the example of our Savior, if our humiliation may tend to the greater honor and praise of our heavenly Father. We should also carefully avoid to undertake anything with a view of gaining praise from superiors or equals.

As to pupils in competition with their companions, who

[45] Luke xiv. 33. [46] *Ibid.*, xxviii.

are expected by parents or teachers to distinguish themselves by their learning or application, they should be taught rather to do their best, not so much through the desire of excelling others than of doing their simple duty, leaving the success of their efforts in the hands of God; for it is often in those competitions that young folks, being pressed thereto by worldly parents or near relatives, learn the first lessons in jealousy and envy, of which we see often dire effects in political contests.

Cassian gives two practical means by which we can avoid the danger of vainglory in our enterprises: "First, let us never allow ourselves to undertake any good work from a motive of vanity, that is, to obtain glory therefrom; secondly, let us strive to continue it as well as we began, for fear that the pest of pride may corrupt all the fruits of our labor." [47] It is also well that we should be ready for the attacks of the devil when he tempts us with thoughts of vainglory, using therefor, for instance, the scornful rebuff, which we find in the inscription on St. Benedict's medal: Begone, Satan, counsel me no evil: The cup thou offerest is filth, drink thou thyself the poison.

4. The fourth means regards the manner of shunning exterior honor, praise and glory, and it consists in hiding from others whatever may bring us the esteem of our fellow man; and this is especially to be recommended with regard to spiritual favors received from above; "If one conceal not from the praises of men the holy desires he has conceived," says St. Gregory, "he will not be able to preserve them from the attacks of the devil. We are, indeed, in the present life, as on the road to our heavenly country; but the malign spirits, like robbers, attack us on our passage. Therefore he that carries his treasure openly, deliberately exposes himself to being divested." [48] Our Divine Master speaks at length on the subject and begins by saying: "Take heed that you do not justice before men (that is the good works that justify man before God) to be seen by them." [49] Then He speaks of alms-giving which is not to be published at the sound of a trumpet, and of prayer which should be performed in secret; likewise of fasting which should be

[47] Instit., L. xi., c. 18. [48] Hom. xi. in Evang. [49] Matt. vi. 1.

concealed by outward marks of joy. Let us nevertheless observe that we are never allowed to neglect our duties toward God and those of charity towards our neighbor for the sake of modesty or humility. All our good God demands of us, when we perform acts of charity towards the needy or of obedience to divine or ecclesiastical law, or other acts of piety, which are greatly recommended, such as daily Communion and the assistance at the religious ceremonies in our churches, is that we perform them not through ostentation and with a view to gaining praise from men, but with a desire to seek the glory of our heavenly Father. Christians are the light of the world and therefore the Master says: "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." [50] Good example attracts, but unless moved thereto by an inspiration of the Holy Ghost, we should never undertake any good work for the sole edification of our neighbor. The danger of delusion is too great and greater still, if possible, is the danger of vainglory and of the presumption of being able to resist its attacks. We have an example of undertaking a good work for the good of neighbor, in the life of St. Francis of Assisi. The Poverello, as he was familiarly called, both on account of his contempt of worldly honors and goods, and of his exemplary self-denial, one day invited one of his religious to go out to preach. They walked together through the streets of Assisi with eyes cast down and without saying a word or noticing anyone. When after having walked several hours, they returned to the monastery, the astonished religious said to St. Francis: "Your reverence has called me out to preach and we have simply taken a walk." "Yea," answered the saint, "we have preached humility and modesty." Indeed, it is not only by words that we can preach, but by our exterior demeanor as well. By being recollected in God, by drawing away our regards from the vanities of the world and by the affections of the heart for the things that regard God's honor and glory, our exterior partakes of all the sentiments of the soul and this demure mien and decorous bearing preach humility, modesty and inward joy, an example much more efficacious than the most eloquent sermon.

[50] Matt. v. 14, 16.

ARTICLE V

Obstacles to Perfection Through the Love of Parents and Friends

I. Love of Parents Commanded—Obstacles to Perfection Caused by an Immoderate Love of Parents, Relatives and Friends—Scriptural Proofs—Experience—Two Kinds of Love for Parents—Sensible and Carnal Friendships—Good, Bad and Indifferent Friendships—All Friendship Not Based on Virtue is Detrimental to the Spiritual Welfare of the Soul—II. Sensible Love Easily Becomes Sensual and Impure, Even if the Object be a Pious Person—How Sensible Friendships are Detected and Recognized—III. Various Means by Which Dangerous Friendships May be Removed.

I. "Honor thy father and thy mother," is the next important commandment to that of the love of God. We are bound to obey God in all things, but we are also commanded to obey our parents in all that is not sin, for we would cease to honor them by following their sinful desires. The love of God above all things and of our neighbor as of ourselves, for God's sake, comprises the whole law and all that the prophets have taught.[1] Now, our progenitors to whom we owe our lives next to God, deserve all our obedience, but also next to God, that is, whenever their desires and orders do not conflict with His holy will, made known to us through His commandments, through His doctrine and the teachings of the Church. The conflict between God and well-meaning parents is most often met with in the choice of a vocation, because our principal duty, yea, we might say our only concern, should be to save our souls and to reach the destiny for which we were placed upon earth, and this we can obtain only by serving God. We can best render that service to Him by choosing the mode of life which He Himself has chosen for us and which is manifested to us by a particular vocation.

[1] Matt. xxii. 40.

There are four principal states of life, to which we may be called: the married state, celibacy, perpetual virginity in the religious state, and the priesthood. If God calls anyone to one of those states of life, He will also inspire the desire for it; but since in this we may easily be deceived by the wiles of the evil one and by our self-love, we should have recourse to frequent and humble prayer and to the advice of our confessor, in order to eliminate all danger of deception.[2]

It is evident that, when one is convinced of his vocation, he fulfills God's designs upon himself by choosing it, and moreover he receives abundant graces to comply with its obligations. It is also clear that in following it, he may, if more expedient, abandon the parental roof. We will not determine the exact time when sons or daughters may leave home, against the will of their parents, to enter the chosen state of life to which they think they are called, for that depends a great deal on circumstances. They may safely follow the time which civil law has determined for the emancipation of sons and daughters from parental control and that is, in most places, the age of eighteen for young women and the age of twenty-one for young men; but parents would act contrary to their duty, if they opposed the vocation of their children even before the time established by the law of their State for their offspring's freedom, provided parents are not in need of their son's and daughter's labor for their support; for it cannot be a true vocation that would leave parents depending upon their neighbor's charity.

The doctrine here laid down regards principally the love of children for their parents: "If any man come to Me," says Our Lord, "and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."[3] Let us not understand by the word "hate" that disposition or passion of the soul, by which we desire evil to others, but Jesus meant hatred of a parent's opposition to the will of God, because He spoke of those who wish to become His disciples. The sense is this: If any one feel inclined to dedicate his life to

[2] *Cfr.* Introduction. [3] Luke xiv. 26.

God and consider it with good reason to be His holy will, he must despise all opposition from the part of those most dear to him upon earth. If one be called to a state for which he has to abandon his nearest relatives, he should make a sacrifice of his affections, and generously obey the divine inspirations in the expectation of the Savior's solemn promise: "Every one that hath left home or brethren or sisters or father or mother, or wife or children, or lands for My name's sake, shall receive a hundred fold and shall possess eternal life." [4] Who would not contemn all earthly love to be repaid a hundred fold by our loving Father in His celestial kingdom? Notwithstanding we find many fathers and mothers who moved by natural affection for their children or through fear of being separated from them, resist their sons' or daughters' desires to dedicate their lives to God's service, whilst, generally speaking, they favor the marriage of their children, if it flatters their pride and comes up to their expectation regarding the temporal prospect of their offspring. On the other hand, we meet also young men and women, especially among the latter, who through attachment to their father or mother, put off the execution of their intention to don the garb of a religious, although they are fully aware that they are called to the religious state. How many young men are there not who, being called to a state of perfection, even to the priesthood, resist the vocation, partly influenced thereto by the evil suggestions of friends and relatives, partly through worldly ambition and finally having resisted the inspirations from God, who has frequently made known His designs upon them, they abandon altogether their pious intention and, of all worldlings, become the most attached to the things of the world.

If one feel himself called to a state of perfection, but for serious reasons is temporarily prevented from executing what our Redeemer demanded of the rich young man, when He said: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor... and come follow Me," [5] he should be thoroughly convinced of the difficulty of his state; for it is indeed an arduous task to reconcile perfection with his

[4] Matt. xix. 29. [5] Matt. xix. 21.

surroundings. In such a predicament, he should separate himself as much as possible from those he loves without failing in his duties toward them, and seek in solitude and prayer what he daily loses in perfect charity, through an unavoidable intercourse with near relatives and with friends who visit them.

II. There is another attachment or sensible affection, called friendship, which is based on natural intimacy between persons of the same occupation or of the same tastes. St. Augustine defines friendship by saying that "Friendship consists in communicating to each other temporal and divine goods with benevolence and charity."[6] Thus we have two classes of friendship: one has for object temporal and the other spiritual advantages. The friendship arising from the same inclinations may be good, bad or indifferent. If it have in view unlawful pleasures—as is but too common among worldlings—the consequences are indeed deplorable; but if it exist between persons solely for their mutual benefit and temporal advancement, or if it have for object innocent amusements, then such a friendship has in itself nothing worthy of condemnation; but there is a more elevated class of friendship which is very commendable and that is the friendship between persons who have no other end in view than their mutual advancement towards perfection. Such friendly relationship, based on an ardent love of God, is rare in the world, but it may be fostered and maintained by members of Catholic societies, especially, if the director be a priest full of zeal for the honor and glory of God and for the salvation of souls. This friendship should exist between all pious souls who often meet and become more or less intimate, but especially between priests or religious of the same order or institute. This is the friendship of saints, who see in each other a means of glorifying God and furthering their own spiritual advancement, by their mutual relations of the ways, by which Providence leads souls to a higher degree of perfection. It is the holy friendship that existed between St. Teresa and St. Peter of Alcantara, between St. Gregory Nazianzene and St. Basil, between St. Augustine and the eminent Bishop Alipus, and many others.

[6] Ep. 155 *ad mart.*

III. There is another friendship which rests upon such natural advantages as beauty, affability in conversation, courteousness in manners, gracefulness in gestures and gait, especially when these combine with a similarity of tastes and inclinations. Such a friendship has nothing of a spiritual and elevating character, and therefore, although pleasing and attractive to worldly people, is fraught with great dangers to pious souls, even if it exist between persons of the same sex; for the charity of God is sure to grow cold in the same proportion that the friendship becomes more intimate. Our good God will not accept a divided heart and as His grace diminishes, the pious soul which has contracted such a friendship, loses little by little, fervor in prayer, approaches the sacraments through routine, begins its meditations with repugnance and ends them without a firm purpose of amendment. We can surmise the rest: the perfection attained by years of labor is lost in a few months, if not weeks, through culpable aridity, the consequence of a friendship from which God was excluded. Let those that think there is no harm in such friendship, reflect seriously that the consequences are often irreparable. It may be admitted that, in the beginning, there is usually no danger of mortal sin, unless one ceases to strive for perfection, which happens sometimes among religious, or unless one omit some serious duty because of frequent visits or intimate colloquies; but it is enough that such friendships retard all spiritual progress, if they cause no other excesses. As these friendships occur more frequently among young women, with whom love is usually a dominant passion, and even are met with among religious, let us seek the sign by which they are easily recognized. The principal signs are as follows: if one party frequently thinks of the person dearly beloved, representing to herself secret meetings, and what was then said and done, especially if these recollections happen during prayer or meditation; if, when the lovers meet, they bestow upon each other caresses or presents, or prolong the colloquies, or regret that some occupation or duty makes it necessary to cut them short; also, if one party to the intimacy feels saddened when their mutual affection seems to be cooling off, or if fits of jealousy arise in the

heart, when her friend shows affection to others, or finally when one conceives an aversion for a third person on whom her friend seems to have transferred her devotedness.

The ordinary and only safe means to conquer the dangerous and detestable intimacy of which we have just spoken is the absolute breaking off from the object of the sinful affection, and by that is meant that not only the affectionate conversation between the friends must cease, but they must refrain from meeting each other and even from looking at each other, unless duty or propriety demands an exchange of a few words. To come to that determination and fixed resolution, recourse should be had to prayer and to the sacraments, for the parties to such ill-advised and dangerous intimacies need special help from God, which is indispensable so that they may understand their sad plight, and that they may be strengthened to execute forthwith their intention of breaking off their intimate relations. Another means is found in making the confessor a confidant of such affections, both during and after the secret meetings, for it is not sufficient that the friendship itself should be confessed, but the parties thereto should disclose anything else relating to it. St. Teresa made known to her director a certain intimacy which had captivated her heart. He recommended to her to have recourse to the Holy Ghost for a whole week, and during that time the good God deigned to extinguish all affection not only for the person she loved, but for any other creature.

If the friendship between two persons was contracted mainly through an admiration for each other's beauty or comeliness, even if this inclination is only one-sided or on the part of one of the friends only, then the affection will inevitably become carnal and we refrain from describing its lamentable and shameful consequences. After all, it can only lead to unchaste thoughts and desires, like the friendship between persons of a different sex, of which we intend to speak presently. Let us cite here only the admonition of St. Basil, which is principally applicable to this case, although St. Basil speaks of friendship in general: "If you are young either by age or vivacity of character, flee all familiarity with your equals; avoid them like a burning

flame: for the abuse of friendship has often enkindled in the heart of many the fire of impurity and that passion has precipitated them to the eternal fire of hell. The wicked spirit has at first attracted them by deceiving appearances of spiritual affection and thereafter has hurled them into the terrible abyss to be there devoured; they who have escaped tempests, the most terrible agitations on the stormy sea of the world, have been submerged by him (the devil) in port (*i. e.*, in the religious state) with their vessel and all those who accompanied them." [7]

IV. We come now to the most dangerous of all friendships, that is, to that which exists between persons of a different sex outside of the state of matrimony. We will omit the consideration of that friendship, which is but a prelude to a matrimonial union. We must nevertheless remark that the time of courtship is fraught with many perils to the spiritual life of the soul, and more than ordinary vigilance is required, on the part of young men and women, to chase from their affection all that may in the least offend their God. Parents are often lax and culpable before God by giving their sons or daughters too much liberty to visit young people of their own age, whenever and wherever they please, and by permitting promiscuous reunions in their own house, unmindful of the danger occasioned by the absence of their respective parents. How can fathers and mothers expect from their children that Christian modesty in looks, words, gestures and behavior, when they themselves encourage boldness, effrontery and indiscreet familiarity? To the marriageable young man and woman, we cannot do better than to exhort them to have frequent recourse to the sacrament of Penance and consult their confessor on the propriety of their interview with persons of another sex, and they should also bear in mind that a great devotion to the Immaculate and Most Pure Heart of the Virgin Mother is a most powerful aid to remain chaste in thoughts, words and actions.

Friendship between persons of an opposite sex, which rests solely upon their natural qualities or on sympathetic grounds is sure, as we remarked, to degenerate into an im-

[7] Serm. *de Abdic. rerum.*

pure love; for, as we have learned already, men and women are to each other like fire and straw, yea, we may add that human hearts are more inflammable than straw, for straw to burn needs a contact with fire, but young and even mature hearts are set on fire by an affectionate look, a tender word, an act of kindness, a congratulation, a sympathetic glance, a word of praise or of approval, a sign, a nothing will excite the passion of love.

V. All the dangers to the progress in virtue that may arise from friendships cannot be entirely eliminated, for society and even family relations are based on them, nor can the danger be always foreseen even by pious and God-fearing Christians.

1. The undeniable truth just stated forces us to the conclusion that young people must seek the help of God, both to recognize where danger lurks, and to overcome it wherever it lies concealed. Innocence suspects no evil and when it is detected in all its hideousness, it horrifies the unsuspecting soul. Pious and innocent youths of both sexes should have recourse to prayer to maintain their innocence in all its purity, but they need also the light of the Holy Ghost to detect the evil, that often lies hidden under seemingly harmlesss attachments, and to preserve the holy fear of God and the detestation of sin which offends Him; but nowadays young people are familiarized with crime in all its forms through the reading of newspapers and the conversations of older people, who readily relate to each other the current news of the latest scandals. This makes American youths bold and fearless of danger, not because they do not understand it, but because they presume on their strength and ability to ward it off. They are in greater need of prayer than the truly innocent, that they may be able to renounce their bold presumption and their insane self-esteem; for "He that loveth danger, shall perish in it." [8]

2. A second remedy for which recourse should likewise be had to God through fervent prayer, is prudent vigilance. In this, young people should imitate the foresight and prudence of the fisherman, who first scans the horizon to assure himself that no storm is brewing before he unfurls

[8] Eccli. iii. 27.

his sails and sets out on the high sea in his frail craft; and if perchance he discerns, when he is at his toil, that a serious storm is approaching, he speeds back into port, and should he be overtaken by perilous squalls, which threaten to engulf his boat, he will not hesitate to throw his whole catch of fish into the ocean to lighten his frail craft to save his life.

Young men and women should be made acquainted by their parents with the dangers they may encounter in the world, and before they associate intimately with others, either for pleasure or gain, let them seriously consider if there be no menace to their faith or morals which may result from their new acquaintances. If they can foresee any serious danger, let them weigh well the warning of our Blessed Lord: "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul? Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?" [9] Again, if in the acquaintance one has already formed, or in the service or business in which he has engaged, a peril of shipwreck of his morals be present, let him not reason with himself how he may still the tempest, nor say: I will rely on God's help: He will come to my aid; for such a prayer is to tempt God; but, as there is no time to lose, let him cut loose forthwith from the snares laid for him by the evil one, and whatever be the cost, let him, like the fisherman, hurry back into port from the impending storm and thus save himself from moral shipwreck.

The foregoing warning is especially applicable to the thousands of young women, who seek employment in various offices as clerks, secretaries, typewriters, stenographers or as waitresses in multitudes of houses or in business enterprises, where their occupations will throw them among all sorts of men, whose exterior gentlemanly conduct sometimes hides a world of malice. The compliments they receive often turn their heads and instead of taking the delicate flatteries as an insult or at least with stoic indifference, they accept it with complaisance, unconscious of the wedge that is being cunningly driven into their heart and of the wound it has made. In all of the aforesaid occupations and similar ones, young women should remember that they are

[9] Matt. xvi. 26.

hired for certain work and that they should shun all familiar intercourse with male employers or employees, that nowise concerns their duties.

3. Young men and women will naturally seek distraction from their day's labor or arduous toil, in various amusements, and who will deny them that right, provided moderation and vigilance be maintained? But where shall they find the proper distractions that will revive and cheer the body as well as the mind without injury to the eternal interest of their souls? The answer depends largely on the inclinations, disposition and temperament of individual persons, although one may, by great efforts aided by the grace of God, overcome his natural tendencies, as, for instance, many saints of an irascible temperament have, under the influence of divine grace, become meek as lambs. Nevertheless those who are of a gay and jovial temperament and full of life and vivacity of spirit, will usually seek merry throngs. Balls and theatres as well as picture shows, are nowadays schools of vice and wickedness, and Satan attracts to them his faithful slaves. Outdoor games for young men and excursions for young men and women of a lively and active disposition should be allowed, provided the young people keep apart from those of the opposite sex and the young ladies remain under the vigilant eyes of God-fearing mothers or trustworthy matrons. Young people should also take an active part in the entertainments approved by and given under the auspices of their parish clergy for pious or charitable purposes, where their pent up vivacity will find a vent and thus they will combine piety and charity with pleasure.

A second class of youths, more demure and more decorous in bearing and less jovial than the first, care little for noisy amusements, but find their greatest pleasure in quiet entertainments with their friends and in paying and receiving visits. Their other leisure time is generally spent in reading instructive books and in the acquisition of all useful knowledge. Their case causes little anxiety; but as all Christians should work for the uplift of their neighbor, they should join some charitable society in their vicinity, which was established with the approbation of the local clergy for the spiritual or temporal welfare of its members; and the

painstaking involved in the association will help greatly towards their own spiritual progress, provided their intention in joining the society be laudable and acceptable to God. Such societies as the Knights of Columbus for men, Young Men's and Young Women's Institutes, the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and other local organizations approved by ecclesiastical authority, are greatly recommended, for they direct young people's energies towards that charity to which the Lord referred when He said: "Amen, I say to you as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me." [10] Bear this in mind, young men and women: whatever you undertake for the welfare of your neighbor, Jesus accepts it as done to Himself.

A third category of young men and women—which indeed is seldom found—is composed of those who live in the world, but are not of the world; for their relations with the world are restricted to the obligations imposed by their duties towards God and man. They are those who wish to live holy lives and tend to perfection. As to those, whom circumstances, for which they are not responsible, keep them from entering into a religious institute, we need only advise them to keep aloof from intimate friendship with anyone, to shun all promiscuous assemblages of which pleasure is the principal aim and end, and to devote all their leisure time to prayer, meditation and spiritual reading; in visiting the sick in hospitals and in their homes, and for young men in visiting the prisoners in their places of detention; but as more outdoor distractions may still be useful, it might be well that with the approbation of their director, they become active members of those societies which have mainly in view God's honor and glory and the sanctification of souls, such as the Sodalities of the Blessed Virgin, of the Children of Mary, Confraternities of the Blessed Sacrament, etc., and that they gladly undertake the work of promoters in the league of the Sacred Heart, and in the society of the Propagation of the Faith. Thus by combining piety with charity, they will work for their own spiritual advancement and contribute to the spiritual welfare of others

[10] Matt. xxv. 40.

by their example and their zeal for the glory of God and the Savior's Blessed Mother.

4. The last advice we can give to Catholic young men and women, who wish to avoid all dangerous friendships, is to be particular in the timely observance of all their Christian duties. No reason except physical impossibility or a superior duty, should be considered sufficient to neglect the hearing of Mass on days of obligation or any other Christian duty. Furthermore they should assist at Mass and receive Holy Communion as often as their duties permit them and in their weekly or bi-monthly confessions, they should make a confident of their confessor in all that regards the welfare of their precious soul.

We end this chapter with the lesson our Savior taught us in that touching scene related by St. Luke, when He visited Lazarus, Martha and Mary, whom He dearly loved, in their home at Bethany. Martha complained to Our Lord that her sister Mary, who was sitting at His feet, let her do all the work. "Martha, Martha," replied the meek Jesus, "thou art careful and art troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary, Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken from her."[11] The "One thing necessary" is nothing else than the attainment of our destiny for which we were all created: when that is secured, nothing else matters, for all else quickly passes away; but when we lose our destiny, Heaven, all is lost; for we can take nothing with us when God calls us by death.

Mary learned besides, at the feet of Jesus, from Infinite Wisdom, the road to perfection, and she was solicitous about nothing else, nor was she troubled like Martha, about transitory things; she understood the heart of Jesus and His love for men, and her own heart was so inflamed with love that she was unmindful of all other occupations or obligations, that the sweet duty of returning love for love with the desire to taste more abundantly still of the heavenly delights, which, like honey, flowed from His Sacred Heart. She had chosen the better part that will never be taken from her, for it will endure forever. The same heart of Jesus, now opened by a thrust of the lance, so that we may enter therein,

[11] Luke x. 41.

is offered us for our consolation and for our strength, and as the food of our souls, from which flow all blessings and a sweetness and delight far surpassing all the pleasures of the world; but the sweet and delightful honey is preserved for those who despise the world and all it contains, to attach themselves to that Divine Heart, overflowing with all that is desirable, and for those, who like Mary at the feet of the Savior, can forget self and all other cares, and allow the divine fire to be enkindled in their hearts. If we will love God with the love of Mary or with the still more ardent love of another Mary, the Mother of His only begotten Son, we will soon lose all attachment to the vanities of the world and especially to that worldly friendship, from which the Savior is excluded, and which, as a consequence, leads to the eternal ruin of myriads of souls.

ARTICLE VI

Temptations of the Devil as Obstacles to Perfection

Souls Tending to Perfection are Exposed to Temptation—Hatred of the Demon for Men—We Should be Ready for the Combat—Let Us Not Lose Courage, for Christ Will Triumph With Us—God Permits Temptation for Our Good—Various Reasons Assigned therefor—Means by Which the Temptations of the Devil can be Overcome: 1. Promptitude in Rejecting Them—2. Have Recourse to Prayer—3. Confidence in God—4. Confidence in One's Director—5. We Should not Expose Ourselves to Temptations.

In several parts of this Manual we have mentioned the devil as an enemy to our salvation and to our perfection; but his temptations are of such danger that we now consecrate this article to their consideration. We are warned by the Prince of the Apostles against his attacks, when he said: "Be sober and watch; because our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour; whom resist ye strong in faith, knowing that the same affliction befalls your brethren who are in the world." [1] St. Peter calls particular attention to the fact that all people are tempted by the evil one; but our enemy attacks with greater violence the souls who strive for perfection, for his hatred of God and his envy of God's chosen friends fills him with rage for their destruction. "The devil," says St. Jerome, "seeks not the infidels who are outside the Church and who, like the king of Niniveh, burned human flesh in a furnace; it is the fervent Christians whom he seeks to snatch from Jesus Christ; for according to the prophet Habacuc, he makes of them his favorite meal. He desires to throw Job down and having swallowed up Judas, he directs his attacks against the Apostles, as the divine Redeemer had warned them: "Satan seeks to sift you like wheat." [2] "The devil neglects to tempt them whom he peacefully keeps in his power," says St. Gregory, "but he is

[1] 1 Peter v. 8, 9. [2] *Ad. Eustoch. de custod. Virgin.*

infuriated with so much the greater violence against us, the more shamefully we chase him from our hearts, of which he pretends to make his dwelling." [3]

No one then should be discouraged or downhearted, if he has been annoyed by frequent temptations. St. Paul gloried in his infirmities, and if the enmity of the devil disturbs the peace of every Christian, why should we not glory with the Apostle for being in the ranks with Christ's soldiers to battle against Satan? "Son," says Ecclesiasticus, "when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation." [4] They who have accepted the yoke of Christ and have fully determined to remain in His service, are not promised a succession of merriment and earthly delights, nor even an absolute peace; but they are told to prepare for battle, their loins girt with justice, that is, by giving to God and man their due, and to live continually in fear of the enemy's onslaught; not the fear of the coward however, but the fear of the intrepid soldier, who knows the wiles of his enemy and therefore is always on the alert. Besides why should we dread what will cover us with an immortal glory? We are weak, indeed, and of ourselves we are powerless to resist the fiery darts of our archenemy, but our good God, who wishes to try us before crowning us, is all-powerful and will combat on our side.

We must before all be fully convinced that the temptations from Satan's part are permitted by our heavenly Father for our good. They are trials by which our true worth is tested. God necessarily requires our obedience or service, and if we encounter any difficulty in its observance, it is there precisely that the merit lies, which alone deserves to be rewarded. The time of probation is short, a point, as it were, in the immense circle, by which we represent eternity, and that short time, passed in the service of our Maker, will bring us an eternal weight of glory, according to the teaching of St. Paul: "For that which is at present momentary and slight of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly, an eternal weight of glory." [5]

I. To impress upon our mind more indelibly the use-

[3] Moral., L. 74, c. 7. [4] Eccli. ii. 1. [5] 2 Cor. iv. 17.

fulness of all kinds of adversities, and of the temptations of the devil especially, we deem it most opportune to consider the reasons why the good God allows us to be tempted by Satan, who would dethrone Him and keep us from reaching heaven if he could.

1. The greatest obstacles encountered in the service we owe to God, is our innate pride, our self-esteem: we easily imagine that what we call success is due to our efforts, and therefore we judge ourselves independent of all control and entirely self-sufficient. Why did our Savior wish to inculcate that without Him we can do nothing, if it were not that humility or the consciousness of our absolute dependence on God is the foundation of our salvation and of our perfection in particular? Trials are necessary to destroy the last vestige of our inordinate self-sufficiency; for they impress us with our weakness and our nothingness. "What doth he know who has not been tried?" [6] Vainglory and presumption keep him from knowing himself. We have had already occasion to point to St. Peter's presumptuous confidence in himself, when he swore he would follow his Master even to death, and we know how he denied Our Lord thrice that very night. His inexperience cost him many years of bitter tears. St. Augustine explains in a few words the sad fall of the Prince of the Apostles, when he remarks that: "Peter, who presumed upon himself before he was tempted, learned to know himself in temptation." [7] "It is by an admirable disposition that we are tempted to sin," says St. Gregory, "for man would think himself very potent, if he found not within himself the impotency of his own strength. But when he is assaulted by violent temptations and feels his strength giving way, he seeks in humility a shield against the attacks of his enemies, and by that itself that he fears to succumb through exhaustion, he begins to keep up his firmness." [8] St. Paul after mentioning the many favors he had received from God, attributes to temptations his freedom from glorying in them: "Lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan to buffet me." [9] He evidently refers to the temptations of car-

[6] Eccli. xxxiv. 9. [7] In Ps. xxxvi. [8] Moral., L. 2, c. 27. [9] 2 Cor. xii. 7.

nal concupiscence, which humiliated him and which he called one of his infirmities,[10] in which alone he gloried. The answer God made to the Apostle, who thrice besought the Lord that the temptation might depart from him, is very significant and proves, as we allege, the usefulness of temptations; for the answer was: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for power is made perfect in infirmity,"[11] that is, thy strength lies in thy weakness, for being conscious of thy weakness and of thy inability to resist the temptations which assail thee, thou wilt have recourse to Me, and then thou art all powerful. Therefore we find in our ecclesiastical history saints, who like St. Ephrem, according to Climacus,[12] begged God to bring back their former temptations, either to strengthen them by new victories or to give them new occasions of meriting; but in this we cannot be over-cautious, for, if we act through vainglory or presumption, the assault of the enemy will be our ruin. Let it be stated as an absolute certainty that we are not allowed to seek temptations and expose ourselves to their danger. Neither should we feel discouraged or feel sad when temptations assail us, but we should follow a middle course, indicated to us in the Lord's Prayer: Lead us not into temptation or allow no temptation to come upon us which surpasses our strength, aided by the graces Thou hast in store for us to withstand them, as St. Jerome explains it: "When we say in the Our Father: Lead us not into temptation, we do not pretend to have it removed entirely; we only ask the strength to resist it."[13]

We should also bear in mind that, when the temptation has passed and we have resisted it effectually, we should refrain from glorying in our victory, as if it were due to our own efforts. We cannot even claim as our own the desire of overcoming the temptation; for God has inspired it, and during all the time the temptation lasted, our good Father was at our side to sustain and animate us. On the other hand, we cannot easily disconcert the devil nor frustrate his plans. He is accustomed to defeat and when his wiles have failed, he strives to instill in our souls the poison of vainglory; and if his ruses be successful, he follows up

[10] *Ibid.*, xii. 5-9. [11] *Ibid.*, 9. [12] Gradus xxix.
[13] In Matt., L. 4, c. 26.

his victory by trying to discourage and dishearten us, as if the good God had abandoned us altogether. Vainglory and depression of spirits are both due to pride: by the first we attribute to ourselves what we have received and glory in it as if we had not received it, whilst depression or dejection is pride that is hurt, and thus we attribute to circumstances or to some other unknown cause our defeat, instead of blaming our own presumption for it and our neglect of placing our whole confidence in God, who never abandons those who have recourse to Him in humble prayer.

2. God has another end in view in allowing us to be tempted by evil spirits: He thereby desires to increase our merits in His sight and the great happiness that is due to them: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptations," says St. James, "for when he has been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God has promised to them that love Him."[14] We have then no reason for complaint, if the devil assails us, for temptations are sent us, not by God to tempt us, but our Heavenly Father allows all kinds of temptations for our good, that is, to reward abundantly the annoyance which they cause us, as well as our fidelity to Him, of which we give proof by resisting them; for St. James says again: "Let no man, when he is tempted, say that he is tempted by God. For God is not a tempter of evil and He tempteth no man."[15] "Let us not think," says St. John Chrysostom, "that God has abandoned us or that He despises us when we are assailed by temptation; let us consider them on the contrary as an evident sign of the care He takes of our spiritual interests."[16] To what interests does the saint allude? To none other than to the spiritual benefits that accrue to us when we come forth victorious from the battle with our archenemy. If we are in the state of grace when we are tempted, and resist courageously, we are doing a pre-eminently good work, very acceptable to God, and thus we receive an increase of sanctifying grace; and as our courageous fight was mainly due to God's strengthening aid or to His actual graces, we, by co-operating with them, gain a right to greater help in the next combat that may be waged against us; and thirdly as all

[14] James i. 12. [15] *Ibid.*, 13. [16] Hom. xxxiii. in Gen.

good works performed in the state of grace are meritorious for heaven, each victory assures us an additional happiness in God's kingdom. As to him who is in the state of mortal sin, when he resists the evil suggestions of Satan or when "he is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured" to sin by it,[17] his resistance undertaken in obedience to God's law, will bring him help from on high tending to his conversion.

Thus instead of fearing temptations, we may welcome them, provided we do not presume upon our own strength, and we are ready to co-operate as far as we are able with God's help and to give glory to Him for the victory we hope for. "We should not fear lest we be tempted," says St. Ambrose, "but we should rather glory in the temptation, saying: it is when we are overwhelmed, that we become strong, for it is then that the crown of justice is being prepared for us.[18] When the battle wages furiously, let us represent to ourselves an angel sent from heaven with a bright crown ready to place it on the brow of the victorious warrior; and we should be fully convinced that no one "Is crowned unless he striveth lawfully," as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.[19]

II. We come now to the means which enable us to overcome our wily enemy:

1. The first means consists in rejecting energetically the first suggestion of evil, as soon as we become conscious of it. This is of the utmost importance, for on the first moment of the temptation our success generally depends: if we are lukewarm or indifferent, when we first detect the evil inclination, then the enemy attacks with all the violence of which he is capable, being fully confident of an early victory; but if the resistance be prompt and determined, he is easily cowed and his attacks, although often persistent, weaken in proportion to the vigor displayed in our defense. Prompt resistance is taught by many Fathers of the Church as indispensable to a successful combat. St. Gregory explains this first means in a clear and convincing manner: "In the beginning," he says, "the suggestions of Satan are less strong and violent, and virtue can easily crush them; but if through negligence one allows the temptation to gain

[17] James i. 14. [18] In Lucam, L. 4, c. 4. [19] 2 Tim. ii. 5.

strength or permits it to penetrate into the heart, it soon becomes so strong that it takes hold of the soul; it overpowers it and acquires an irresistible strength on the will." [20]

We are taught that when we are tempted to commit a mortal sin, say a sin of an impure desire, it is only a venial sin if we do not resist it energetically, unless our consent to it be fully deliberate. But do we understand what the consequences of that venial sin are likely to be? Venial sin weakens the soul, it makes us less worthy of God's help during the struggle, and therefore we can surmise the result when the devil launches a more vigorous attack than the first. He may not be aware of our lukewarm resistance, but if he suspect it, will he not redouble his efforts to crush the soul already weakened or wounded in the previous attack? In theory we must admit that full knowledge of the guilt and perfect consent of the will are required to constitute a mortal sin, but a venial sin through pusillanimous and timid resistance to a temptation of the devil, will usually lead to full consent of the will and to mortal sin.

2. The second means is prayer. We do not mean to give a second place to prayer, as if a prompt and energetic resistance were superior to prayer as a defense, for prayer is always necessary; we must pray always, as we have learned, and therefore we say many times a day: "and lead us not into temptation," but we mentioned first the resolute resistance to temptation, because, as sin is the greatest evil in the world, the horror which it should inspire comes first, but prayer comes simultaneously with our hatred of sin that follows upon our advertence to the evil temptation. When two mortal enemies unexpectedly meet, the fear of danger is first and thereupon follow hatred and revenge, whilst they make ready their arms for the fatal blows. The arm of the Christian is prayer and should be resorted to as soon as we are aware of the danger. No prayer can be more useful than the Sign of the Cross with Psalm sixty-nine, which begins and ends as follows: "O God, come to my assistance; O God, make haste to help me—I am needy and poor; O God, help me. Thou art my Helper and my Deliverer; O Lord, make no delay." We may add with

[20] Moral., L. 32, c. 16.

Cassian that the first verse is for all those who are assailed by the suggestions of hell; it is a well fortified citadel, an impenetrable armor, a shield that resists all the darts of the enemy.[21] But as Saint Chrysostom well remarks, those ejaculatory prayers should proceed from the heart, and we should imitate David who was wont to cry for divine assistance from the depths of his soul.[22] As to the sign of the Cross, it is for us like a heavenly army in battle array; it is all-powerful. "When the devil sees the Sign of the Cross," says Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, "he remembers Jesus crucified."[23] "All the wiles of hell are upset by the virtue of the Cross," says Saint Augustine,"[24] and how could it be otherwise, for faith teaches us that by the Cross the Savior has redeemed the world and vanquished the infernal legions.

3. The third means is found in avoiding the occasions which for us are commonly causes or frequent sources of temptations, for "He that loveth danger shall perish in it."[25] Reason itself teaches us that by familiarizing ourselves with danger, we diminish in our soul the horror of the temptation and of the sin itself; yea sin becomes excusable in the eyes of worldlings who live in the midst of temptations. How can one expect to resist a temptation which he seeks, when we are all exposed to be overcome by them, even when we strive to avoid them? Therefore St. Basil remarks: "We are sometimes forced to accept the combat, even when we have not provoked it; but to provoke it wilfully would be sheer folly. We might perhaps excuse the one who is defeated in a struggle he could not avoid—I wish, nevertheless, this should never happen to the athletes of Jesus Christ—but for him who is defeated in the combat he has himself sought, besides having committed a shameful imprudence, he deserves not even to be pardoned."[26]

The rule here laid down should generally be followed, and no one should presume upon his own strength to act in opposition to it. Nevertheless a wise and prudent director may allow his penitents to provoke a combat by seeking temptations, but only those that regard the irascible passions

[21] Collat., L. 10, c. 9. [22] Ps. cxxix. [23] Catech., 3.
[24] L. *de symb.*, c. 1. [25] Eccli. iii. 27. [26] Const. Monast., c. 4.

and the vices which have their source in them. Thus, when there is question of anger, jealousy, envy, impatience, aversion, disgust, indignation and such like, a director who knows his penitent to be a person of solid and tried virtue, may allow him to frequent the company of rude, disagreeable and abusive acquaintances, with the view of exercising him in the virtues of humility, patience, meekness, benevolence and charity; but it would be like tempting God to expose one's self to the danger of sensual appetites and especially to that of a sensible and carnal love.

4. The lack of foresight in preparing for future assaults and a general ignorance among Christians of the ruses employed by Satan, whose hatred of pious souls is only secondary to his hatred of God, and the conviction that no one should confide in his own judgment in matters relating to his own spiritual welfare, will force us to the conclusion that it is most advisable that they who aspire to perfection and who, therefore, are more vigorously assailed by the infernal dragon than worldlings, should disclose to their director or confessor the evil thoughts, desires or actions to which they were tempted. This becomes obligatory upon scrupulous people and upon those who are ignorant of the ordinary circumstances and surroundings, which the devil calls to his aid to ruin souls, provided they suspect at least their danger. There are several reasons why taking advice from a director regarding one's temptations is useful to everyone, learned or unlearned: it is an act of humility pleasing to God, which may merit that mistrust of one's own strength so necessary to an absolute and perfect confidence in God. It accords with the design of God, who wishes us to have recourse to His ministers for most of His favors, if such recourse be possible, and therefore He rewards the trust we place in them. Another reason is found in the teachings of the masters of spiritual life, who assure us that experience demonstrates the great horror and fear the demons have of being detected, and therefore, they prevent, as far as they can, penitents from consulting their confessors; for it is well known that as soon as the devil is aware that the penitent has determined to ask advice of his director of conscience, temptations usually cease or greatly diminish in violence.

Most people have also much to learn in the warfare they must wage with the evil one, for the same tactics should not be employed in all temptations. We have given the ordinary means of resisting temptations, still, the less dangerous temptations may be better despised, and of them we should take no notice whatever: such are temptations against faith, of blasphemy, of impious thoughts derogatory to the honor of God and His saints; these temptations inspire commonly such a horror to any Christian that their danger is little to be dreaded. The reason for adopting this practice is that the more one endeavors to battle with such thoughts, the more affliction one causes himself, and all to no purpose.

We must act differently with all temptations that are of their nature exceedingly dangerous, like those regarding the concupiscence of the flesh and the passions of the soul, such as temptations against chastity, which regard carnal pleasures and which so easily confuse and obscure the intellect and enslave the will; such are also temptations of hatred and revenge, envy and sadness, because of another's success or good fortune, and those of vanity and complacency in the praises we receive. As to these and similar temptations it is generally more advisable to combat them by acts of the contrary virtues. Thus temptations of the flesh are best met by mortifications, and if we cannot then and there resort to such means, we should at least protest before God that we would rather die than to offend Him. We have an example of this manner of overcoming such a temptation in the life of St. Francis of Assisi, who in order to overcome the temptation against the holy virtue of purity, rolled in thorny bushes of wild roses until the temptation left him. As to other temptations mentioned above, he that is tempted to hatred or revenge, should truly feel ready to do whatever reasonable service to the enemies who have injured him; and he that is tempted with envy should sincerely wish all kind of prosperity to those whose excellence, advantages or good fortune he is tempted to begrudge, and finally, he who is tempted to vainglory, should recognize that of himself he is nothing and refer all praise and glory to his God.

It is true that there are exceptions to those rules, and whereas we cannot explain them at length in this volume,

we see the necessity of having recourse to a director, who alone can advise us in all cases that may arise and we should strive to follow his advice.

We will see another reason for consulting a director in matters regarding temptations that usually assail religious or other pious people, if we are aware that the devil generally hides his attacks under the appearance of virtue, for "The malign spirit is more to be feared when he deceives than when he attacks vigorously," says St. Augustine. [27]

St. Bernard also teaches that our wicked enemy, by transforming himself into an angel of light, often succeeds in ensnaring his victim: "Honest people," he says, "are never deceived except by an appearance of virtue." How many dangerous friendships have had their beginning in a plea or pretext of usefulness or of piety? How many religious under the appearance of zeal for the honor and glory of God and the welfare of the community, have thereafter found fault with the conduct of other members, sowed discord among them and even found fault with the orders of their superiors, and ended by despising the holy rules of the Order?

5. The fifth means by which we secure the victory in the attacks of the evil one, is found in an entire confidence in God; but this absolute reliance on His help must go hand in hand with a sincere diffidence of our own strength, and that for two reasons: one from the part of God and one from our part. If we rely upon ourselves, our confidence in God is thereby reduced and we act contrary to the truth, which teaches us that of ourselves we cannot even have a good thought that does not come from God, [28] and He resisteth the proud, for He will not divide with us the honors of a worthy and salutary thought or desires. He is the source of all good and without Him we can do nothing good.

Our full and entire confidence in God alone is based upon these three reasons: The first is the infinite goodness of God, who wills our salvation and our advancement in virtue, and therefore He will not allow temptations to assail

[27] In Ps. xxix. [28] 2 Cor. iii. 5.

us which we cannot overcome with His grace, for "God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it." [29] The second reason is that the grace of God is always available: "Ask and you shall receive," but we should ask with full confidence in His promise to hear us: "Whatsoever you ask, when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you;" [30] and the third reason that should animate us to resist every temptation with all the powers of our soul is that our good God fights at our side and never abandons us unless we ourselves cowardly give up the fight, for "No one hath hope in the Lord and hath been confounded." [31] Ah! If we could impress deeply upon our minds these simple truths to animate our courage, we should cease to fear temptations, and we would rather welcome them as opportunities to prove our attachment and love for our heavenly Father, and from the depths of our hearts we would defiantly shout: "If armies in camp should stand against me, my heart shall not fear." [32] Two miracles in the life of Our Lord show us how acceptable to Him is that full confidence in His power and willingness to help us in all our necessities: one is the restoration to life of the daughter of a certain ruler, who came up to the Savior and adored Him saying: "My daughter is even now dead; but come, lay Thy hand upon her and she shall live." It is needless to state that this great confidence was immediately rewarded. The other is the case of the woman who was troubled twelve years with an issue of blood. She came up behind Our Lord and touched the hem of His garment, saying within herself: "If I shall touch only His garment I shall be healed," and Jesus turning to her, said: "Be of good heart daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole." [33] This simple narrative attests better than the most learned arguments the effect of a childlike confidence on the heart of God.

[29] 1 Cor. x. 13. [30] Matt. xi. 24. [31] Eccli. ii. 11.
[32] Ps. xxvi. 3. [33] Matt. ix. 18 *seq.*

ARTICLE VII

Scruples as Obstacles to Perfection

Summary—I. What Must be Understood by Scruples?—Scruples, Doubts, Remorse—II. Causes of Scruples—Scruples are all Obstacles to Perfection, but are also Means of Perfection—How to Banish Scruples—Morality of the Acts of Scrupulous Persons—III. Remedies Against Scruples.

I. A SCRUPLE is not a doubt, as some dictionaries define it, nor it is, as worldlings pronounce it, a judgment of a delicate conscience that hates and carefully avoids sin; but scruples consist in judging an action to be sinful when it is not, or judges it to be a mortal sin when it is only venial or a mere imperfection. As long as there is doubt in one's mind regarding the malice of a thought, word or deed, it cannot be called a scruple. There may be a sound reason for a doubt, but a scruple is a judgment without reason or foundation.

Neither should we confound remorse of conscience for sins committed with scrupulosity, for a repentant sinner has no doubt about his guilt, and if he torments his soul with the recollection of his guilt and the fear of punishment which his sins deserve, his confusion, shame and dread in the presence of the all-just but merciful Judge, are totally different from the tortures of the scrupulous who are always fearful, troubled and disquieted whether they act or not; for if they act, they find their actions sinful and if they refrain from acting, they consider themselves guilty for their neglect of acting. From this we can easily understand that scruples are a serious obstacle to perfection, especially so because the scrupulous refuse to subject their judgment to their director of conscience, excusing their foolish apprehensions through the conviction that he does not understand their particular state of conscience. In order to continually advance towards perfection, tranquillity of mind and peace of heart are indispensable; for constant vigilance

and prudence are required, and a disquieted and troubled mind, as well as a lack of determination, prevent the scrupulous from making any firm decision and from carrying it out when one has been made. Scrupulosity is thus not a doubt, nor timidity in action, nor lack of decision, but fear of doing wrong causes those baneful dispositions of the soul.

II. The causes of scrupulosity itself are principally these three: natural temperament, the envy of the evil one, and we may find a third one in the trials which God allows to purify pious souls.

1. Scrupulosity is often caused by natural temperament, for pious people of a melancholic disposition are inclined to it much more than those of a phlegmatic, sanguine or irascible nature. Sanguine or choleric temperaments are incompatible with fear of any kind, and as for those of a phlegmatic temperament, they are too cold, languid and sluggish in the service of God to fear sin and to consider it as a reason for their inactivity. Besides they are usually selfish, whilst the scrupulous are inclined to great generosity and self-sacrifice, but even in this, they detect the danger of offending God.

Scrupulosity leads to obstinacy, for without consulting their director or confessor, the scrupulous have often recourse to immoderate fasts and macerations of the body, by which they injure their health, and thus, the fear of imaginary moral evil causes them to fall into a real offense against God's law, which of its nature may be grievous, but ignorance often excuses them from sinning mortally. Their pitiful condition is often made more deplorable, if they seek solitude or frequent persons of a strict conscience and especially those who like themselves are too meticulous in the observance of their Christian duties. If scrupulous persons happen to consult a director likewise inclined, then it is a case of the blind leading the blind.

2. The ruses and wiles of Satan are well known. He has always two opposite tactics ready to ensnare the unwary, as we have had already occasion to remark with respect to worldlings, in whom he inspires a greater love for worldly pleasures and sinful amusements, and as to abstemious persons who live a secluded life, he usually tempts them by

counseling imprudent mortifications. Here Satan acts in precisely the same manner: he strives to make those of a lax conscience more lax still and as to those of a scrupulous disposition, he endeavors to render them still more timid and pusillanimous: he works principally on the imagination of the scrupulously inclined by fanciful dangers to confuse their mind and to direct their affections in opposite directions, so that they do not care to move one way or another. This causes the persons thus afflicted great suffering and often renders them mistrustful of God's goodness and diffident of their spiritual advisors, and it may finally bring them to abandon their religious exercises, prayer and meditation, as well as the reception of the sacraments, which only cause them vexation of mind and greater scrupulosity. Such cases are exceedingly rare in the United States, but are frequently met with in Europe and even sometimes in this country among religious. These inflict upon themselves great troubles and anxieties, and not a little annoyance to their confessors, as they are seldom satisfied with their previous confessions, are obstinate in their wishing to repeat them all and seek constantly new confessors with no better satisfaction or result.

Why does Our Lord allow pious souls to suffer from scruples? Whereas scruples torment often newly converted Christians who have led sinful lives, we naturally conclude that their heavenly Father allows it to purify them more and more by the severe trials which scruples occasion. It confirms them also in the hatred they bear to sin, for as they hate the appearance of sin, they conceive a greater horror for sin itself, and thus we find sinners who have returned to the practice of their religious duties, making rapid strides towards perfection, after they have been tried in the furnace of suffering, which scrupulosity has brought upon them, and therefore, we may look upon scruples as we do upon temptations: if we resist them energetically under the guidance of a learned and pious director, no more harm can come from scruples than from temptations.

III. Many have written at length on the remedies against scrupulosity, but besides prayer to which recourse is to be had in all our necessities, there is after all but one

remedy upon which reliance can be placed, says St. Alphonsus Liguori, and that is the absolute obedience to a spiritual director or confessor, who will not fail to impress upon the mind of his penitent these two uncontrovertible truths: That he who obeys his confessor cannot err, for he who follows the injunctions of the minister of God, obeys not man but God; "He who hears you, hears Me" says Our Lord. Besides what greater scruples should one fear than the one which consists in disobeying, as disobedience exposes one to the danger not only of losing his peace of mind, devotion and advancement in spiritual life, but likewise of shattering his health, and what is still worse, of jeopardizing his eternal salvation.[1]

St. Antoninus relates that a disciple of St. Bernard was so cruelly tormented with scruples, that he dared no longer offer up the holy sacrifice of the Mass; but his director commanded him to go and say Mass, taking upon himself the whole responsibility. The pious religious obeyed and there was an end to his trouble.

St. Ignatius is said to have been so dreadfully troubled with anguish of soul that he resolved not to partake of any food until, with God's help, peace and tranquillity should be restored to him. His director condemned such an extreme measure and the saint regained his former peace of mind and tranquillity of soul by following the director's orders. We are not told how St. Bonaventure and St. Augustine overcame their scrupulosity, but we may assume that the advice of their friends or superiors together with fervent prayer won them their victory.

[1]*Cfr.*, St. Liguori, *Homo Apost., tr.* 1 *a.* 8; also *Praxis Conf.*, no. 95 *seq.*

THIRD PART

ARTICLE I

On Moral Virtues

Introduction

The observance of what we learned in the two preceding treatises, of which the first taught us the means of perfection, and the second the obstacles to it, cannot alone lead us to that charity in which perfection consists; for charity cannot be maintained without the practice of the moral virtues, and neither can charity exist without the two divine virtues of faith and hope, on which it rests as on a foundation. "He who loves Me," says Our Lord, "keeps My commandments." We keep the commandments of God in all their perfection through the practice of the moral virtues and of the evangelical counsels in particular.

When we spoke of the obstacles to perfection, we necessarily had also to speak of the moral virtues as opposed to them or as means to overcome them; but we had principally in view the purifying of the souls who are still in the purgative state. The present treatise is especially intended for those who have already subdued in some measure the passions of the soul and the concupiscence of the flesh, have learned to despise the world with its vicious maxims, and have fully resolved generously to overcome the ruses and wiles of Satan. We mainly intend to treat here of moral virtues for souls as the illuminative state, since those souls already purified practice them without being constantly thwarted by their perverse passions, which they are supposed to have partly subdued, so that they can now observe with greater facility whatever corresponds to a perfect Christian

life. Although we cannot extirpate every evil passion, nor flee entirely the dangers of the world in which we are exiled, nor escape the envy of the evil one, they of the illuminative state have already learned to despise all the obstacles to their advancement and they must now seek in the moral virtues a sure means of arriving at the unitive state, in which their thoughts, words and actions shall conform in all things to the will of God.

CHAPTER I

The Four Cardinal Virtues

Prudence

I. Nature of the Virtue of Prudence—Its Elements—Its Importance—
II. How Prudence may be Acquired?

When we speak of virtues in this Manual we mean Christian virtues, that is, either the inclinations to act properly, or the exterior or interior acts themselves that tend toward our eternal salvation. "Virtue," considered as an inclination is, according to St. Augustine, "A habit of the soul inclining man to act well and properly." This *inclination,* as it tends to our eternal welfare and to God's honor and glory, necessarily comes from God *as well as the habit* itself which is infused in our souls together with sanctifying or habitual grace. St. Augustine calls "prudence the science of the things which we should do or avoid," and Aristotle defines it: "A habit of the soul directing according to right reason man's actions in all things whether good or evil." Prudence is considered by Scaramelli, after St. Thomas,[1] mainly as an intellectual virtue since it depends principally on the intellect of man; for the property of the virtue consists in the research of the intellect not only to find out whether an action is morally good or bad, but also to detect the best manner of executing it, if it be good or if it be evil, of avoiding it; and thereafter, prudence inclines the will to act in accordance with the judgment formed by the intellect.

According to the Angelic Doctor, prudence contains three acts. The first is *counsel,* which relates to finding out the different ways of accomplishing an end in view; for to consult is to seek. The second act *judges* what counsel pro-

[1] 1. 2. q. 61 a. 2.

poses and this is the part of man's reason, but reason also tends to the execution of the work, and thus it *commands* the will to carry out the way, which was proposed by the intellect and which the judgment has approved. Hence, counsel, judgment and command are the three acts which constitute the virtue of prudence. That we may understand what is taught here by St. Thomas, let us take for an example the prudence of a Christian magistrate on the bench who has to decide the guilt or the innocence, according to law and the evidence, of a supposed murderer brought before his tribunal. He hears the witnesses on the side of the prosecution and of the defence and the arguments pro and con from the attorneys of both sides; he examines carefully the testimony and the arguments to arrive at a just decision: this we may call the "counsel" or the first act. Having weighed all the circumstances of the case as well as the law itself, his reason dictates to him that the man is innocent or guilty with or without extenuating circumstances, and accordingly he forms a "judgment" of the criminal's guilt or innocence: this is the second act. His conscience as well as his reason now tell him that it is his duty to pronounce sentence and thus reason "commands" his will to announce the sentence in accordance with the judgment already formed: this is the third act of prudence and with it the virtue ends its task.

To form a prudent judgment man has many aids, such as the imagination, memory, intelligence, docility in seeking and accepting advice, ability and prevision or foresight, and these belong to "counsel;" reason is an essential aid to "judgment," and circumspection and precaution belong to "command," the third and last act essential to prudence; for circumspection and precaution regard the manner in which the judgment may be best executed to obtain the end in view, by removing all the obstacles and all opposition to a successful issue. Thus, as the will is a blind faculty, which may be easily swayed by the intellectual and sensual appetites, counsel, judgment and command leave nothing undone to insure the execution of the command, except the faithful compliance of the will.

If we now consider the faults we may commit against

prudence, it will help us to a better understanding of what we have just learned. We may sin against prudence by excess or by defect. The faults by defect are: precipitation, irreflection, inconstancy and negligence,[2] and their gravity or guilt is proportionate to the importance of the end we propose to ourselves in our deliberation. In matters of great consequence we should not act hurriedly, except if there be no time for suitable deliberation; for precipation impedes the first act of prudence, that is, counsel, in that it prevents due consideration of the means to be employed to arrive at the intended results. "In matters of importance," says St. Gregory, "counsel should not be prompt." Irreflection is hurtful to judgment as without proper reflection no proper attention in the choice of the means is possible. "It is necessary," says Aristotle, "to deliberate a long time when we can decide but once."[3] Inconstancy and negligence prevent the proper judgment, because through inconstancy we change for absurd and futile causes the judgment which reason has dictated, and through negligence we either prevent that a proper judgment may be timely reached, or having arrived at the proper judgment, we prevent our reason from passing forthwith to the "command" for the execution of the judgment.

We sin by excess against prudence in six different ways: by the prudence of the flesh, by craftiness, by ruse, by fraud, through an inordinate care of temporal goods and through an excessive solicitude for the future.[4] By the prudence or wisdom of the flesh, we understand the seeking of all that the flesh covets and of the means to give it satisfaction. Of this prudence the Apostle says: "The wisdom of the flesh is death, but the wisdom of the spirit is life and peace, because the wisdom of the flesh is an enemy of God."[5] This wisdom or prudence of the flesh together with the love of honor and glory is the fruitful cause of all the other excesses opposed to Christian prudence: craftiness or dishonesty in deceiving the neighbor, ruse and fraud, which are but craftiness is action, and a too great care of temporal goods, as well as an immoderate solicitude for the future, are the im-

[2] St. Thomas, 2. 2 q. 53.
[3] Ethics, c. 9.
[4] St. Thomas, 2. 2 q. 55.
[5] Rom. viii. 6

mediate consequences of the wisdom and prudence of the flesh. Nevertheless a moderate care of temporal goods and a reasonable solicitude for the future are neither sinful nor condemnable, for the Holy Ghost teaches both by referring us to the example of the industrious and provident ant in the following reproachful admonition: "Go to the ant, O sluggard, and consider her ways and learn wisdom, who, although she hath no guide, nor master, nor captain, provideth her meat for herself in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." [6] Let us conclude that without prudence we cannot acquire nor maintain any virtue. "Prudence," says St. Thomas, "aids all virtues and acts with them," [7] for it tends to the complement and perfection of them all. This is apparent to any one when he has attentively considered, as explained, the three essential parts of prudence: counsel, judgment and command, together with the other faculties of the mind which come to their aid and the defects which prevent the proper exercise of each one; for we can readily understand that they enter necessarily into any virtuous deed. How many circumstances of persons, time and place have not to be thought of in order that prudence may direct the mind in their examination and arrive at the proper judgment! "Prudence," says St. Basil to his religious, "must precede all the actions one proposes to perform; for if one neglects that virtue, there is no act of any kind, although it may appear to be good, that does not degenerate into a vice, when it is not done at the proper time and with moderation." [8]

II. We now come to the means by which the virtue of prudence is acquired, and the first is to ask it of God, for He alone can bestow it: "Counsel and equity is Mine, prudence is Mine." [9] Therefore we must frequently beg it of God, as light from above helps the counsel in finding the means, and the judgment in discerning the opportunity of the means; and we all know how much God's grace is required to determine our reason to proceed to the command, for if there be doubt or hesitation in the command, the will lacks firmness in executing it.

[6] Prov. vi. 6.
[7] 2. 2. q. 47 a. 5 to 2.
[8] Const. Monast., c. 15.
[9] Prov. viii. 14.

The second means consists in removing from the soul whatever may obscure its intellect and prevent sound reason from arriving at an opportune and proper judgment. The love of riches, pleasures and glory confuses man's intellect and perverts his reasoning faculties. "Delectation," says St. Thomas, "greatly corrupts the judgment and especially that which comes from carnal pleasures; for it absorbs and swallows up the soul entirely, and drives and drags it toward the pleasures of the senses. The perfection of prudence and of every other intellectual virtue resides on the contrary in the absence of all sensual affections." [10] Therefore if we desire that our reason be guided solely by the light of our faith, we must strive to subdue the passions of the soul and the concupiscence of the flesh, and then the soul untrammelled by evil influences can act soberly and prudently. There remain still the evil examples and maxims of the world and the wiles of Satan to be overcome, but neither the world nor Satan is a formidable enemy for the Christian, who has conquered the evil inclinations of the soul and the cravings of the flesh.

The third means to acquire wisdom and prudence is found in the careful reflection on the actions of our past life, for experience gains both knowledge and prudence, if the investigation be thorough, by considering the means employed, the circumstances that thwarted or aided the results, as well as the combination of the circumstances and events that produced it. This applies to any serious undertaking before us, for which we find a similar case in our past experience.

The fourth means consists in taking counsel with persons of great learning and prudence. "My son," says the Wise Man, "do thou nothing without counsel, and thou shalt not repent when thou hast done." [11] "Treat with the wise and prudent. Let just men be thy guests." [12] This advice of the Holy Ghost is of the greatest importance in all enterprises, in which we have a personal interest, for no one is a fit and proper judge in his own affairs, as man is too easily swayed by his self-love, when his interests or the interests of those he loves are at stake.

[10] 2. 2. q. 53 a. 9. [11] Eccli. xxxii. 24. [12] *Ibid.*, ix. 21.

CHAPTER II

On Justice, the Second Cardinal Virtue

Summary—I. In What Justice Consists and the Duty it Imposes—II. Justice, a Source of Peace—III. Means to Acquire it—IV. Restitution.

I. "Justice," says St. Thomas, "is a habit, by which with a constant and perpetual will, one accords to each person his rights," [1] or in other words, justice is a virtue which inclines the will to give always to each one his rights. Justice is a noble virtue and its beauty consists in that through it, a Christian who practices it, has more regard for the advantage of his neighbor than for his own. Thus justice may be called a beneficent virtue and, according to St. Thomas, "the virtues which are the most beneficent for our equals, are necessary the greatest, for virtue is essentially a beneficent power." [2]

II. Justice is the inseparable companion of peace and its faithful friend, and as happiness is intimately attached to peace, justice is a source of constant happiness. St. Augustine commenting on the words of the Psalmist: "Justice and peace have kissed," [3] says: "Practice justice and you will have peace, which will come to embrace it. If you do not love justice, you shall not have peace, for both love each other and kiss. So that he who cultivates justice, also finds peace which it kisses. They are two friends; possibly you desire one without esteeming the other, for there is no one who does not desire peace, and notwithstanding, not all desire justice... Love then also justice, for peace and justice are two friends. If you love not the friend of peace, neither shall the latter love you, and shall not come to you." [4]

[1] 2. 2. q. 58 a. 1. [2] 2. 2. q. 58 a. 12 [3] Ps. lxxxiv. 11. [4] In Ps. lxxxiv.

"Great is the splendor of justice," says St. Ambrose, "it is a virtue rather born for others than for itself; it protects our common life, society." [5]

Two principles are here laid down or rather one principle that embraces both, to wit: the individual and the social life of man. There can be no peace between individuals nor between States without justice, and that is applicable not only to individuals but to families, to societies, to corporations and to nations as well. If one seeks to encroach upon the rights of another, it engenders fear, uneasiness, discord, turmoil, tumult, violence and even sanguinary feuds, bloody seditions and internecine wars. The principle extends not only to worldly goods, such as riches, positions, mercantile and monetary interest, but to the honor, reputation and good name of the individual citizen, as well as of the family and of the State; it embraces all temporal goods dear to man. If justice be ignored in practice, peace vanishes, for they are inseparable.

III. Let us now examine the principal means by which the virtue of justice may by acquired. The first means is to preserve ourselves from the cupidity of all earthly goods, for there is no injustice done to a neighbor that has not its source in that sordid passion. This we learn from the Apostle: "The desire of money is the root of all evils." [6] It is not that men are totally ignorant of what is just, for "Nature has given us a certain sentiment of justice, a knowledge of equity," says St. Basil; [7] but the immoderate desire of riches obscures the light of reason and vitiates the honest sentiments of the heart, because "There is not a more wicked thing than to love money, for such a one setteth even his own soul for sale." [8]

We should then detach our hearts from all earthly goods and nothing can be a greater aid to acquire that perfect detachment from them—and better still the contempt of them—than the frequent consideration that soon we must leave the much-coveted wealth behind us, together with the serious meditation on the words of our Savior: "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the

[5] *De Offic.*, L. 1, c. 28.
[6] Tim. vi. 10.
[7] Homil. xii in *Princip. Prov.*
[8] Eccli. x. 10.

loss of his soul." [9] To still impress us more deeply with the vanity of all earthly goods, the example of the Redeemer is most apt to engender a great contempt for riches in the hearts of those who wish to lead holy lives. He came to enrich us with everlasting wealth, and heavenly riches are acquired through poverty of spirit upon earth, in imitation of the Savior's wilful poverty: "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that being rich He become poor for your sakes, that through His poverty you might be rich." [10]

The second means by which the virtue of justice may be acquired consists in avoiding the least fault contrary to it. In the matter of justice, according to St. Augustine, no fault should be considered slight, and the reason is that they who are guilty of slight injustices already conceive great thefts in their heart or by little and little are disposed to commit the most flagrant injustice. This is taught us by our Savior Himself: "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful in that which is greater, and he that is unjust in that which is little, is unjust also in that which is greater." [11] Besides, by repressing the least desire of injustice and by abstaining from the slightest unjust act and—especially by being prompt in repairing the unjust damage done to his neighbor through theft or guilty carelessness—one acquires such a lofty idea of justice and such a delicate conscience in matters of right or equity, that his sense of probity revolts at the least thought or suggestion of injustice in his dealings with his neighbor.

A third consideration that will help Christians to preserve the strictest justice is that sins of injustice are not remitted by contrition only, however perfect it may be, even if it be united to the sacrament of Penance, but restitution is also required, if the penitent has the means and opportunity to make it; and the reason is that he perseveres in his injustice until full and entire satisfaction has been made for the harm done to his fellow-man. "As the practice of justice," says St. Thomas, "is an indispensable condition to salvation, it follows that to restore what one has unjustly taken from his neighbor, is necessary unto salvation." [12]

[9] Matt. xvi. 26.
[10] 2 Cor. viii. 9.
[11] Luke xvi. 10.
[12] 2. 2. q. 62 a. 2.

If a Christian be well instructed in the obligation of restitution and of repairing the wilful damage done to his fellowman's goods or to his reputation, only hardened sinners could be found who would deliberately transgress the laws of equity and justice. This applies especially to mortal sins of injustice; for one cannot be condemned to the eternal punishment of hell for a venial sin.

CHAPTER III

On Fortitude, the Third Cardinal Virtue

Definition of Fortitude—Its Influence on Fear and Audacity—Its Degrees of Perfection—Means of Acquiring the Virtue.

I. Not all courage, intrepidity and contempt of danger is fortitude, for fortitude is a virtue, which supposes not only the deed to be good, but it adds to man's merit; and if courage and audacity animate the perpetrator of an evil deed or enterprise, the wickedness of the evil intent is increased by the energy displayed in its execution. Therefore, when we speak of fortitude, we mean that Christian constancy which makes man surmount the difficulties and obstacles he encounters in the practice of his duties and enables him to persevere in the service of God until death. In that wide sense, fortitude is not a special virtue, but enters into the practice of every virtue, and it is in that wide and general sense, that it must be called a cardinal virtue. As a special virtue, fortitude may be defined: a firmness in accepting and surmounting the greatest difficulties and dangers in the performance of a special duty.

Grave difficulties and dangers inspire fear, but fortitude removes all fear, even the fear of death, the greatest of all temporal evils. Our Savior had in mind this Christian fortitude when He said: "Fear ye not them that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear Him, who can destroy both soul and body in hell." [1] In the same chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew Our Lord foretells to His disciples the sufferings they will have to undergo for their faith. We know how well they learned and observed the lesson, and not only the Apostles, but hundreds and thousands of Christian heroes braved death in manifestation of the faith.

St. Thomas teaches that fortitude makes the Christian despise the greatest dangers and undertake what is most op-

[1] Matt. x. 28.

posed to his natural desires and inclinations. It also moderates audacity, for the fortitude operates according to sound reason and thus represses and moderates that daring and boldness which reason condemns. We conclude that deeds of fortitude must necessarily be lawful and conform to prudence dictated by sound reason, and if they are indifferent in themselves, that is, neither good nor bad, the end proposed should be good; for fortitude supposes that the deed, which it inspires or fosters, be virtuous and acceptable to God.

II. All virtuous deeds are not equally good and meritorious, for one virtue excels another in dignity and merit. Among the moral virtues, the virtue of religion is the most excellent, and greater than the moral virtues are the divine virtues of faith, hope and charity: "But the greatest of them is charity." [2]

There are nevertheless many degrees of fortitude in a specific virtuous deed, and they depend principally on the sacrifices that are made to obtain the end in view. One may sacrifice for the faith or for charity the goods of fortune, that is, a portion or the whole of his wealth; another, the service of his bodily strength and of all its energies; another, his intellectual faculties and the affections of his heart; another, his honor, reputation and good name; another again may offer up his life and with it he sacrifices everything, except what one is not allowed to jeopardize, to wit: the spiritual welfare of his soul; for when the Apostle wrote that he desired to be anathema for Christ Jesus, he spoke from the overwhelming abundance of his heart, burning with love for his Redeemer and he meant that, in case such a thing were possible, he would freely and willingly become an outcast, if God's glory required it.

We come now to two heroic degrees of constancy: one is found in a holy life and the other in Christian martyrdom. The first consists in all the exertions and pains one endures in mortifying all the passions which come from the sensual and intellectual appetites. This combat is long, for, as we have seen, it only ceases with our last breath. This warfare of our reason against the passions of our soul and

[2] 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

the concupiscence of the flesh is arduous as well as lasting, and is one of the evil consequences of original sin. What patient endurance, what fortitude is not required that sadness and cowardice may not bring despair on the soul! "The patient man is better than the valiant (warrior) and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh cities." [3] Forsooth, there is more honor and glory in taming the vicious affections of the heart and in subjecting them to sound reason enlightened by faith, than there is in taming wild beasts; and how futile and empty are all the praises bestowed upon the greatest conquerors of the world, when compared with the well-deserved glory of the Christian heroes, who have passed their long lives in overcoming their evil inclinations, in subjecting their passions to reason and in vanquishing the world, the devil and the flesh by severe penances and macerations, and by fleeing from all that might contaminate the purity of their familiar intercourse with the Lord of heaven and earth! "Is there anything more valiant," says St. Gregory, "than to subject to reason all the movements of the soul, to repress by the force of the spirit all the desires of the heart, to renounce our own will, to despise the visible things and to love what is invisible!" [4] This fortitude to constantly contend and unceasingly war against all the obstacles, hindering the practice of the Christian virtues and especially of those that belong to one's state of life, is absolutely indispensable to them who strive for perfection. Enemies lurk everywhere within and without, and with what courage must we not steel ourselves against them, when we become aware that victory after victory is required to keep them subdued!

If the first degree is highly praiseworthy and most noble because the valiant Christian is ready to sacrifice all, save his life, for the honor and glory of his Maker and his advancement towards perfection, what shall we say of him who, for the sake of the faith or any other virtue, is ready to sacrifice life itself and with it all he has in this world? "Greater love than this no man hath," says Our Lord, "than that a man lay down his life for his friend." [5] Our Savior has been the first in the New Law to give the example of

[3] Prov. xvi. 32. [4] In *Ps. poenit.*, Ps. 2. [5] John xv. 13.

this sublime charity, but His example has stirred up the brave spirit of thousands of His adherents, all eager to follow in the footsteps of their Master. Thanks be to God, there are still Christian heroes in the world, who brave death by the contempt of the dangers of infectious diseases or by exposing their lives to carry the faith to barbarous and idolatrous people. Christian fortitude, far from being reduced by a fear of temporal evil, makes its possessor the more eager to enter upon the perilous task, because, if death overtakes him in the performance of his charitable designs, he imitates more perfectly his Master and Savior. He seeks his God and God's holy will in the heroic sacrifice in the midst of its dangers, and through death he finds Him. By undertaking a virtuous deed at the peril of his life, the brave Christian becomes a martyr in desire, but by suffering death his martyrdom is complete. Primarily, the name of "martyr" belongs to the early Christians, who by their death gave testimony of their faith, for the word "martyr," of Greek origin, simply means "witness;" but he who sacrifices his life in the performance of any Christian duty or Christian virtue, may be said to be a living witness of the faith that is in him, provided he joins to Christian fortitude the love of God, for whose sake he accepts death, and becomes the willing victim of his generous impulses and ardent charity.[6]

III. Let us now examine the means by which the virtue of fortitude may be acquired:

1. It is plain, since fortitude is a Christian virtue and one which requires superhuman power to remain constantly faithful to God in the discharge of the most arduous duties, that God alone can grant the supernatural strength to properly comply with them and that He grants it to prayer. The Prophet King attributes the following words to God, by which He invites us to have recourse to Him in our difficulties and tribulations: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify Me."[7] The same Prophet bids us not to fear but to place our whole confidence in God: "In God I have put my trust," he says, "I will not fear what flesh can do against me;"[8] and again: "The Lord is the protector of my life;

[6] St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 124, a. 5. [7] Ps. xlix. 15. [8] *Ibid.*, lv. 3.

of whom shall I be afraid?... If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear." [9] "My God is my helper and in Him shall I put my trust... Praising (praying) I will call upon the Lord, and I shall be saved from my enemies." [10] "My Lord is my helper and my protector; in Him hath my heart confided and I have been helped... The Lord is the strength of His people." [11]

2. To confidence should be added an ardent love for God, not so much to increase the trust reposed in Him, as to augment the Christian fortitude to surmount all obstacles and to despise the dangers encountered in the most heroic deeds. Of what sacrifices is human love not capable? Through love of wealth, many brave the perils of the sea and the dangers of vast solitudes infested by ferocious animals. In pursuit of a transient glory, the soldier gladly exposes his life, and enamored of a vain beauty, the lewd lover sacrifices his all to satisfy a base passion. Shall a Christian, inflamed by a pure love of God, be less capable of braving the greatest dangers to acquire the imperishable riches of heaven, to enjoy its everlasting delights in company with the saints and angels, and to reign as gods for all eternity, being made similar to the infinite God, our infinitely lovable, beautiful and amiable Father? This is unbelievable; for, even if we lay aside the reward of a happy eternity promised to God's faithful servants upon earth, the love of God is identical with the keeping of His commandments and the sincerer the love with which our hearts are inflamed, the more determined we will be to conform our will and all our actions to the Divine Will, and the greater will be our contempt of the obstacles to a perfect conformity. Love breeds confidence in the object beloved and what can we fear when God is with us? Fear belongs to the pusillanimous, and he who sincerely loves God, has no other than filial fear or the fear of offending the bounteous Father he so tenderly loves, and even that filial fear is gradually removed by the ardent charity which compels the fervent lover rather to undergo the tortures of a thousand brutal persecutors than to offend the Source of all good and the Giver of all good gifts. Let us hear again the Apostle:

[9] *Ibid.*, xxvi. 1, 3. [10] *Ibid.*, xvii. 3, 4. [11] *Ibid.*, xxvii. 7, 8.

"Who then shall separate me from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or famine or nakedness or danger of persecution or the sword?....For in all these things we overcome, because of Him who hath loved us, etc." [12] All they whose heart is inflamed with an ardent love for God, whether acquired through meditation or through contemplation or through the practice of the virtues of their state of life—for the love of God grows and is perfected not only through interior acts of love, but also by all works undertaken in the spirit of charity—may, relying for their fortitude on the graces from on high, confidently proclaim with St. Paul: "I am sure that neither death nor life...nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love which is in Christ Jesus Our Lord." [13]

3. The third means consists in strengthening our fortitude by contracting the habit of overcoming the many obstacles we encounter in complying with our ordinary duties and the virtues of our particular state of life. "The spiritual man," says St. Clement of Alexandria, "increases the perfection of his fortitude by the exercise which has for its end the subjection of the movements of the soul." [14] The constant exercise of subjecting all the passions of the soul and the sensual appetites to sound reason, is of paramount necessity, for he that cannot overcome small difficulties and obstacles, how shall he remain firm and constant in the presence of grave dangers?

To this third means belongs also the foreseeing of the evils that Providence may have in store for us to try our fortitude. "He who lacks fortitude," says St. Thomas, "can prepare himself against dangers by a long premeditation. This is even done by every strong soul when it is at leisure." [15] The reason thereof is evident, for our imagination brings before the mind future events with all their coloring and circumstances, as if they were real and actually happening, at the moment they are brought before our mind, and the determination of the will to contemn them, steels the will against dreaded realities. St. Ambrose gives another reason: "Adversity which cannot be foreseen,

[12] Rom. viii. 35 *seq.* [13] *Loc. cit.* [14] Stromat. vii.
[15] 2. 2. q. 123 a. 9.

coming unexpectedly, upsets the soul," he says. "As in time of war the enemy who suddenly surprises his adversary, encounters but little resistance and easily overwhelms that adversary who is not ready to defend himself; likewise unforeseen evils make greater impression on the soul;" [16] for then it is not familiarized with the sudden and unexpected danger.

4. The fourth means is to be found in the frequent reflection and meditation on the example of Our Lord, who gladly suffered the most cruel torments and the death of the Cross after three hours of agony, to rescue us from the jaws of hell. The Prince of the Apostles after exhorting us to suffer with patience the unjust treatment of others, adds: "Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you follow His steps." [17] The example of the Savior should indeed encourage us all, because we are Christians only in so far as we follow His footsteps and imitate Him, for "The disciple is not above his master," [18] and "Whosoever doth not carry his cross," says Our Lord, "and come after Me, cannot be My disciple." [19] Jesus hid Himself from His enemies, who sought to apprehend Him, but when the time appointed by the Father had come, He willingly and joyfully presented Himself to those who sought His life and forbad Peter to use the sword in His defense. Nor did He try to defend Himself before the Sanhedrin, nor before Herod, nor before Pilate, for He foresaw that the very answers He might give would bring about His condemnation, whilst He refused to answer the calumnies to explain the meaning of His public declarations, which were brought as accusations against Him. He might have pleaded for a lighter and less ignominious sentence, but in all His utterances we find no inclination to soften the heart of His judges. Isaias had prophesied of the Savior: "He was offered because it was His own will, and He opened not His mouth; He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter and shall be dumb as a lamb before His shearers, and He shall not open His mouth." [20]

Jesus came to do the will of His Father and when the

[16] Lib. 1 *de Off.* 38. [17] 1 Peter ii. 21. [18] Matt. x. 24.
[19] Luke xiv. 27. [20] Isaias liii. 57.

chalice of the bitterest sufferings was presented to Him in His agony in the garden, the memorable words, "Not as I will but as Thou wilt," explains fully His meekness, resignation and fortitude in the midst of the most dreadful and acute pains imaginable: so that He could in His last agony on the cross exclaim with a sigh of relief: "It is consummated," [21] and bowing His head He gave up the ghost. [22]

Conclusion. Before ending this article on fortitude, we wish to sound a note of warning to the young and to all those who have just entered into the road to perfection. Fortitude is indeed a necessary virtue and St. Paul warns Timothy to "Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus," [23] and our Savior teaches us that "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent bear it away;" [24] but "He that striveth for the mastery is not crowned, except he striveth lawfully." [25] Let them therefore not imagine because fortitude enters into the practice of every virtue and leads to heroic deeds, that all should aspire to great and magnanimous enterprises, such as the conversion of the heathens, the care of persons stricken with infectious diseases, the education of the blind, deaf or dumb, etc. Let them understand that the good God has no need of their services, but if He elect to choose them for some valiant enterprise of mercy or charity, His call will resound deep in their innermost soul. Let them first learn to overcome the wicked inclinations of their sinful nature, eradicate self-love, eschew vainglory and seek perfection in the practice of their ordinary duties and of the virtues that belong to their state and condition. False fortitude easily degenerates into temerity, if not into audacity; and when disappointments or reverses are met, discouragement and pusillanimity are often the result of imprudent attempts. Novices in the science of spirituality must allow themselves to be conducted by wise and virtuous directors and they should undertake nothing extraordinary or uncommon without his knowledge and consent. Let them be reminded again that he who is his own master, is led by a fool.

[21] John xix. 30. [22] *Ibid.* [23] 2 Tim. ii. 1.
[24] Matt. xi. 12. [25] 2 Tim. ii. 5.

CHAPTER IV

On Temperance, the Fourth Cardinal Virtue

Temperance as a Cardinal Virtue—Temperance Considered as a Special Virtue—Its Excellence—It Moderates the use of Food and Drink by Shunning Excesses—Advantage of Temperance—Mortification as a Means to Obtain the Virtue—Excesses to be Shunned.

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1. Temperance is a virtue, because it restrains and represses the passions of the soul and the sensual appetites, and in that wide sense, it is a general or cardinal virtue, because it promotes moderation in all human acts, and in that its influence for good is common to all moral virtues. Temperance is also a special virtue, if we regard is as repressing and restraining the sensual appetites, within their proper bounds. In this latter sense temperance is a moral virtue which moderates man's sensual appetites conformably to right reason and the divine law. Sensual delectations, that originate in the use of the five senses, must be curbed and restrained, for through the ravages of original sin, the desires of the flesh are no longer subject to reason.

2. To understand properly the beauty and excellence of the special virtue of temperance, we should first consider the vice of intemperance opposed to it. This vice makes man similar to brutes, whose actions are governed by two instincts; individual self-preservation and the preservations of the species, and the brute animal has no other passions than the two that correspond to its instincts, viz: gluttony and lubricity. If brutes appear intemperate, they are so by nature and in their apparent intemperance, they find their sole satisfaction and felicity; but, as they are not endowed with reason, they are not subject to the passions of pride, jealousy, envy, anger, hatred, revenge or any others that have their source in the intellectual faculties of a rational

being. If man becomes intemperate, he is so by choice, and thus he abases himself to the level of the brutes, for he despoils himself of his reason to become a brute among brutes, and in the sight of God he becomes even more vile than the brute, for God cannot abominate a creature which follows the instincts of its nature, whilst He excludes from His kingdom His favorite creature on earth, man, who destined to reign with Him eternally in heaven, fails to reach the end for which the Creator brought him out of nothing, by giving himself up to his basest passions.[1]

What can there be more deplorable than the vice of intemperance, which makes man incapable of any function or duty belonging to a rational creature in the exercise of its noblest endowments, viz: reason and free will? Prudent counsels and just judgments cannot be expected from a brain oppressed by the vapors of excessive food and the fumes of immoderate drinking, which clog the operations of the mind and leave it a prey to fancies that excite and inflame the animal voluptuousness of our depraved nature. An intemperate man is incapable of serious study and careful attention to his worldly affairs, on which his temporal welfare and that of those dear to him depend, and as to the spiritual care of his soul, he is utterly unable to direct his mind to heavenly things, which his brutal passions, after gaining the upper hand, detest and abhor. Spiritual reading, meditation and prayer become irksome to him, and if for a time he still receives the sacraments, imposed by the law of God and of His church, their reception, if not sacrilegious, remains without fruit. Intemperance, by corrupting the heart, leads inevitably to hardness of heart, and ultimately to the loss of faith, so well expressed by the Psalmist: "The fool hath said in his heart: there is no God."[2]

3. Temperance enlivens and quickens man's intelligence the more he refrains from all sensual enjoyments; it develops his reason and favors sound judgment; it strengthens his will and confirms his determination to carry out his well-laid plans, unhampered by the desires of his sensual appetites; it clears his memory of the thousands of remi-

[1] 1 Cor. vi, 9, 10. [2] Ps. xiii, 1.

niscences and representations of intemperate festivities and worldly pleasures, the bane of fruitful meditations, pious prayers and ardent contemplations, and it enhances the merit of every virtue by removing the greatest obstacles to a pure and holy life. Temperance leads to purity of heart and "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." [3]

4. From the explanations already given, we must conclude that temperance demands, if we wish to avoid the dangers of intemperance, restriction in the use of food and drink. To eat and drink solely for the pleasure and satisfaction it produces to the sense of taste, is contrary to the designs of Providence, for God endowed man with that sense and with an appetite to warn him of the necessity of having recourse to regular repasts. For a healthy man to stimulate his appetite by intoxicants or other means is already a perversion of the Creator's gift, but to continue to eat and drink, after the appetite has been fully satisfied, for the sole pleasure it procures to the palate, is not only sinful, but it is also fraught with great danger to the body as well as to the soul; it is intemperance in eating and drinking; it is gluttony or ebriety with carnal lust as its offspring, for Bacchus and Venus are closely related.

Let us remark nevertheless that the sense of taste cannot be destroyed by any act of mortification, nor is it sinful to feel the pleasure which a delicious food or drink procures to the palate, but the pleasurable taste should be referred to an honorable end, such as the conservation of our health or of our bodily strength, and better still, if we see in it a means to conform our pleasurable taste to the will of God: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God." [4]

We should not infer from this that a Christian's diet should consist in the coarsest food, and that rich and poor alike should be allowed only the food and drink absolutely necessary to the preservation of their lives. We distinguish, with St. Thomas, two kinds of necessities, regarding the quality and quantity of our repasts: one absolutely necessary to the conservation of our lives and strength of our bodies, and one of propriety or such necessity that one

[3] Matt. v. 8. [4] 1 Cor. x. 31.

cannot suitably or conveniently exist without it, according to his condition or state. Temperance regulates them both. It is evident that one must partake of sufficient food and drink, not only to preserve his life, but likewise to conserve his strength to properly comply with his particular duties. Thus laborers, artisans, professional men, husbands, religious and ecclesiastics should not deny to their body wholesome nourishment, required for the fulfillment of their obligations; but according to the Angelic Doctor, "Temperance takes also into consideration the necessity of propriety, not only with regard to the body, but also with regard to each one's occupation, possessions, riches, duties, and especially with regard to the exigencies of propriety." [5] Thus a table that would be frugal for the rich, would be excessively sumptuous for the poor, and the repast of a sovereign although exquisite, may not pass the limits of propriety, whilst it would be disproportionate to the condition of the manor born. Nevertheless it is to be deplored that there is in our day a general tendency among all classes, the rich, the well-to-do and the laborers, to abandon frugality for a sumptuous manner of living, without due regard to the health and strength of the body, and as for mortifications, the largest majority of Catholics seem to hold, in practice at least, the doctrine of the Protestants that mortifications are reprehensible and contrary to the spirit of Christianity, for the Savior, they say, has not commanded fasts, vigils, and the macerations of the flesh, practiced among religious of both sexes in Catholic monasteries and convents. Protestants and infidels of our day ridicule the austerities of the anchorites of the desert, of Christian virgins, and of hermits and monks of all ages.

5. To form a correct judgment of the usefulness of mortification to acquire the virtue of temperance in eating and drinking, we will first take up the teachings of the Bible. Christ our Savior has praised the austere penances and mortified life of St. John the Baptist; [6] He has predicted that His disciples would fast when He was not any longer with them; [7] He said of Himself that He had not

[5] 2. 2. q. 141 a. 1 to 3.

[6] Matt. xi. 8.

[7] *Ibid.*, ix. 15.

where to lay His head;[8] He has commanded that everyone should take up his cross and follow Him.[9] St. Paul taught and practiced the doctrine of his Master: "If you live according to the flesh," he said, "you shall die; but if by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live.[10] In another epistle he writes: "I chastise my body and bring it under subjection, lest, having preached to others, I myself become a reprobate."[11] "In all things let us exhibit ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in tribulations....in labors, in watchings and fastings."[12] "Those who are Christ's crucify their flesh with its vices and concupiscences."[13]

The history of the Church proves clearly that the early Christians followed closely in the footsteps of the Savior and His apostles. This is proven by the ridicule resorted to in their writings by those who deride the mortifications of the ancient anchorites of the desert and of the early hermits and monks. But let us not think that Christians alone have been taught the necessity of self-denial and of warring against the flesh and the passions of the soul. The Pagan philosophers themselves have found in man's nature the reason of leading a life of abstinence and of bringing the sensual and intellectual appetites under subjection. Pythagoras[14] and Plato[15] argued that man is composed of a body and a soul, and that it would be unworthy of him to allow himself to be dominated by the evil inclinations of the body like brute animals, instead of subduing them and bringing them under the dominion of reason. Porphyrius,[16] who followed Plato's doctrines, made the destiny of man attainable only by occupying himself with God and by detaching himself from all earthly pleasures. Many other Pagan philosophers have held the same views on man's destiny in this world.

Plato, in spite of his inconsistencies, approached the nearest of all Pagans to the Christian doctrine, which principally bases the necessity of temperance on the corruption of man's nature, vitiated through original sin, and on his supernatural

[8] *Ibid.*, viii. 20. [9] *Ibid.*, xvi. 24. [10] Rom. viii. 13.
[11] 1 Cor. ix. 27. [12] 2 Cor. vi. 4. [13] Gal. v. 24.
[14] Born about 600 B. C. [15] Died 347 B. C. [16] Born A. D. 233.

destiny in union with his Creator, which he must earn by conforming his actions to the divine will. Christian doctrine tells us that man's nature is composed of two substances: a material body and a spiritual soul. The soul is the mistress and governs the actions of the body as well as its own, as it is endowed with intellect, memory and free will; but the soul itself may be considered under two aspects: what it is by nature and what it is by a special dispensation of its bounteous Creator. Man is by nature a moral being, since he is capable of judging between good and evil, but since he was created for a supernatural destiny, his natural moral sentiments have been elevated by the knowledge of his destiny, through divine revelation, which also confirmed his consciousness of the obligations resulting from the natural law inscribed by God in his heart. Furthermore, God's grace raises the Christian's aspirations and emotions to the supernatural state and makes him a supernaturally moral being, a condition which he could not have attained, after Adam's fall, without the merciful intervention of his heavenly Father. "Without Me you can do nothing," says Our Lord, that is nothing that tends to our supernatural destiny.

In the state of innocence man had no need of mortifying the passions of the soul nor his sensual appetites, as they were subject to reason and reason was subject to God, and man could in that state have always conformed his will to the will of his Maker. Mortifications would have been useful to strengthen him against the temptations of the evil one, if God permitted his attacks to try man's obedience; but what might have been optional and left to man's judgment before the fall, became an imperious duty after the fall of the head of the human race, who, through a desire of divine knowledge and wisdom, rebelled against his God, and as a punishment, he and his descendants have ever felt the baneful influence of their vitiated nature. They are constantly thwarted in all their laudable undertakings by the darkness of their intellect in discerning virtue and vice, good and evil; by confusion in their counsels and deliberations to arrive at just judgments; by irresolution in their decisions and by unstableness in the execution of their plans. The cause of man's deplorable state—to which

conscience and experience bear witness—is found in the fact that fierce passions of the intellectual and sensual appetites have supplanted the preternatural inclination to virtue, by which Adam was enriched at his creation; and it belongs to temperance as a general virtue, with the aid of special virtues, to curb all the wicked passions and to moderate, as a special virtue, the inordinate desires of the sensual appetites and especially those of food and drink; but as we shall often have occasion to remark, any virtue, by overcoming the vice or passion opposed to it, strengthens man's will, dissipates in part the foggy mists of his mind and thus enables him to practice with less effort all other virtues. Besides, as we shall presently learn, he who possesses one virtue in all its perfection, possesses them all in a like degree, or as it is often expressed: One perfect virtue perfects them all.

Regardless of the teachings of the Bible, every unprejudiced thinker must admit that the evil inclinations of our nature are strengthened by indulgence and weakened by being strenuously opposed, and that they can be effectually curbed, but not totally smothered and subdued. This conclusion is sufficiently established by solid arguments and general admission, based on the experience of all fair-minded men; but must we further argue that all mortifications are praiseworthy and that excesses merit no condemnation?

We should not judge of the rigorous fasts, abstinences, vigils and of other mortifications undertaken by holy men and women, by the dictates of our natural reason only, without due regard to the spiritual welfare of souls. Our temporal interest must be looked upon as subordinate to our eternal happiness, for "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?" If there be any authenticated cases reported of saints who have extenuated their bodies by protracted vigils, severe fasts and other extraordinary mortifications, and thereby injured their health or shortened their lives, charity should compel us to attribute it to an error of judgment or rather to an inspiration of the Holy Ghost; but moderate austerities, which the saints have recommended and the Church approves, are not injurious to the health; for we find among

the Trappists and other austere religious orders, more old men than among the people of the world. Gluttony and voluptuousness have killed more people than all the fasts and macerations of the body. Nevertheless we should shun all excesses and give to the body what it needs, to remain a fit instrument to the soul in the performance of all our duties towards our God, our neighbor and ourselves; but we should also bear in mind that excess in eating and drinking is more prejudicial to our temporal and eternal welfare than moderate mortifications are to the health and strength of the body.

ARTICLE II

Humility

I. Two Kinds of Humility—The Essence of Humility and its Definition—1. Humility of Spirit Engenders Humility of Heart—Considerations Proper to Make us Humble in Spirit: (a) In the Order of Nature: We Owe All That We Are and All That We Have to God; We Can Claim Only Sin as Our Own—It is Wicked to Esteem One's Self Because He Sins No More—(b) In the Order of Grace: We Can do Nothing Without God's Grace—Habitual and Actual Graces Are Pure Gifts of God—Our Imperfections.—II. Humility of Heart—In What Humility of Heart Consists—1. What Humility Towards God Forbids—2. Humility Towards our Neighbor—How We Can Esteem Ourselves Less Than We Esteem Great Sinners—III. The Degrees of Humility—Have Before You the Savior's Humility to Enable You Gladly to Bear Insults—IV. Exterior Humility Manifested in Our Conduct—Various Acts of Humility.

The moral virtues which have a certain affinity with or resemblance to the four cardinal virtues, now demand our attention; for although similar to the latter, they differ from them in many respects. All virtues depend more or less on the cardinal virtues, and without them, their practice would be either impossible, difficult or imperfect. It is said of wisdom that "She teacheth temperance, and prudence, and justice, and fortitude, which are such things as men can have nothing more profitable in life."[1] The moral virtues need the counsels of prudence to guide the soul against excesses and defects and to preserve a proper middle, for safety lies in a proper middle: *"In medio virtus,"* and whilst it dictates the most fruitful means to arrive at a proposed end, it indicates also the obstacles to its execution and the way to remove them. On justice depend all our duties towards God, our neighbor and ourselves and the special virtues needed to practice them. Thus, religion, piety, devo-

[1] Wis. viii. 7.

tion, obedience, truthfulness, gratitude, meekness, etc., are subordinate virtues of justice, and therefore St. Thomas calls them potential virtues of the cardinal virtue of justice, which prompts them and bestows power and aid to practice them. In like manner sobriety, suitable abstinence, chastity, continency and modesty are potential virtues of temperance, and as in the practice of every virtue, there are difficulties to be overcome and obstacles to be removed, all virtues depend more or less on fortitude, according to the energy and bravery required in their practice; patience, courage, in mortifications, constancy, perseverance in martyrdom primarily belong to fortitude.

Humility, although not the most excellent of all moral virtues, deserves the first place among them in our consideration, because it is the root and as it were the foundation on which the special virtues, moral and divine, are built. Faith is properly called the foundation of all virtues, because on faith the sacred life of grace rests. "Without faith it is impossible to please God," but faith to be the foundation of the sacred edifice of our spiritual life, must be accompanied by charity. Humility is the root and foundation of all virtues, not as forming a part of the sacred edifice of our spiritual life, but because it is the solid ground on which the whole edifice is built. It precedes the building of the sacred edifice of holiness and sanctity, because it prepares the ground, removing from it the light soil, loose sand and straw, which would endanger the solid foundation of the faith and of the whole edifice. It is clear also, that no matter how strong the edifice may be, if it be undermined by pride, the vice opposed to humility, the whole edifice totters and collapses. Thus, as "Pride is the beginning of all sin," [2] so is humility the beginning or the root of all virtues, and with the growth of humility, all virtues are strengthened, but charity perfects them all.

Three fundamental truths lie at the bottom of our inquiry regarding humility and its nature, and they have formed the object of the most serious meditations, not only of Christians but even of infidel philosophers, and the Christian doctrine on this point is but an answer to these three

[2] Eccli. x. 15.

simple questions: What am I? What art Thou, O Lord? What relations exist between the Creator and His rational creatures? Our simple catechism has taught us from our childhood, that God is the Creator of heaven and earth, that man is a creature of God and endowed with understanding and free will, created to serve His Maker here upon earth, and after this life, to be happy with Him forever in heaven. These simple truths would teach us the necessity of humility, but when our Savior came upon earth, He showed us the beauty and worth of the virtue by His words and His exemplary humble life. "Learn of Me," He said, "that I am meek and humble of heart." [3] How indispensable and salutary this humility of heart is, we shall now learn; but we should first understand in what humility consists.

With St. Bernard, we distinguish two kinds of humility: humility of mind and humility of heart. It is evident that the knowledge of our nothingness must precede any interior and exterior act of humility, for man, as a rational being, cannot humiliate himself nor gladly suffer humiliations, unless he be contemptible in his own eyes. Therefore humility of mind merits first our attention and humility of heart naturally flows from the former, like copious waters from an abundant spring.

I. "Humility," says St. Bernard, "is a virtue by which man becomes contemptible in his own eyes by the true knowledge he has of himself." [4] This definition implies two interior acts, one of the intellect, by which we see ourselves as we are, and the other of the will, which despises what the intellect sees to be worthy of contempt. St. Thomas teaches the same doctrine in other words, when he says that humility resides principally in the appetite of the soul or in the inclination of the will, which is regulated by the knowledge one has of himself, [5] and from it we conclude that the clearer the knowledge we have of ourselves, the greater will be the contempt of ourselves.

We will now consider the reasons why each one of us should despise himself, but as we cannot dwell at length on each motive, we will not do more than indicate them, leaving

[3] Matt. xi. 29. [4] *De gradu humilit.* [5] 2. 2. q. 161 a. 2.

to each one to arrive at the knowledge of his nothingness by a serious and practical meditation on his nature, his inclinations and his actions.

1. What are we in the order of nature? Let us go back, say one hundred years, and what were we then? No one even thought of us. I for one was pure nothingness. Possibly, the house I now occupy and surely the country in which I dwell with its mountains, its valleys, its rivers, its forests, grass and flowers existed and that for thousands of years, but I...I was nothing. A hundred years ago the same sun shone by day and the same moon and stars by night, and that from the first day, when the Creator said: "Let them be made," but I, during those six thousand years more or less, I....I was nothing. What was I during that incomprehensible eternity of duration that preceded the creation? I was nothing, no more than the myriads of existing things that walk, leap, move, grow, feel or are inert about me in the heavens above or on the earth below. But now I exist and that is at least something, but soon this body must return to dust: a forced separation, that fills the strongest breasts with dread, will tear the soul from the body. Still, it is something to have lived even a few years; but what belongs to me of all that makes up my existence? Surely I did not make myself, for nothingness cannot make anything. What have I that I have not received? Besides, are we able to keep and preserve our being and our endowments? Undoubtedly not: if God should withdraw His omnipotent hand from us, even for one instant, we would return to nothingness from which we came. Therefore, whatever good and desirable things we claim as ours, are given us by the Creator and are given continuously, and thus God's providence is rightly called a continual creation.

Would to God we could disclaim what is truly and solely our own, sin. God cannot be the author of sin and iniquity, because sin aims at the destruction or dethronement of God, and man by sin vainly allies himself with the wicked spirits to annihilate the infinitely good and necessary, as well as absolute Being. This is precisely what makes man even more contemptible than nothingness, for whosoever is in

the state of sin, he is in rebellion against God, and whosoever dies in the state of mortal sin, he continues in his hatred of God for an endless eternity. Truly of such a man the Savior speaks when He says: "It were better for him, if that man had not been born." [6]

2. If we cannot claim anything in the order of nature as belonging to us, much less can we claim as our own any good in the order of grace. To begin a supernaturally good work, that tends to our salvation, we need a prevenient grace from God, that is, a divine grace that precedes even our thought of beginning or the desire to perform a supernatural work. The grace of God must continually aid us to will a supernatural action and to continue it until its completion, in the same manner as, in the order of nature, our life with all the endowments of our being are given us and preserved for us by our bountiful Father.

Supernatural deeds to be meritorious of heaven must be performed in the state of grace, a grace which makes our soul beautiful in the sight of God and deserves eternal happiness in heaven, if we persevere in it until death. We cannot merit that grace: it is a pure gift of God and when we are in possession of it, we are enabled to increase the supernatural beauty of our soul and its merits, but not without the actual graces from God to inspire and enlighten the soul and to aid it, by giving it a gentle impulse in commencing, prosecuting and completing a supernatural action. Is there anything in all these things which we can claim as our own? Are those graces not gratuitous gifts of God? All those favors of a bountiful Father are given us that they may bring forth much fruit by our co-operation with them and by employing His gifts in His service. We should not forget that the greater the Lord's liberality and clemency toward us, the greater is our indebtedness to Him, and consequently, instead of looking upon our endowments of soul and body, and the excellence we enjoy, as a reason to extol ourselves, we should rather regard all favors and prerogatives as debts contracted, which we must repay with a constantly increasing and accumulating usufruct; for we should be fully convinced that the usufruct of God's gifts is also

[6] Matt. xxvi. 24.

due to His infinite bounty, and therefore constitutes a new loan to be paid with compound interest.

Here let us pause a moment for reflection. If we compare our lives to the saints', how many reasons have we not for profound humiliation and contempt of ourselves, because of the many graces we have despised and the many opportunities we have neglected to make progress in virtue and holiness. Let us even suppose that we have co-operated with all the graces we have received; we can never claim that we have done so with entire perfection; for, as one grace acted upon with promptitude and energy, merits more abundant graces, we would have arrived before now at a high degree of sanctity, if we had always co-operated with God's graces with promptitude, alacrity and perseverance. We shall find another reason for humility of mind in the many sins of our lives, whether mortal or venial. He who has committed one mortal sin only, knows that as long as he was in the state of sin, he was in all respects, but one, a demon and an enemy of God, yea a rebel in league with the hellish fiends. Sentence has not been pronounced against him, but he still stands condemned to eternal punishment to share the punishment of Lucifer and his angels, whose cause he has espoused, unless his sin has been forgiven by his merciful Father in heaven. His sincere sorrow and contrition, you will perhaps say, together with the priest's absolution, have blotted out his iniquity; but no one short of a revelation, can be assured of his pardon, although he should never despair of God's goodness and mercy, for "With the Lord there is merciful forgiveness." [7] Nevertheless, "No man knoweth whether he is worthy of hatred or love." [8] As to deliberate venial sins, they constitute such a flagrant ingratitude and deprive us of so many divine favors, that they deserve to be deplored and expiated by a life-long penance. With David we all must confess: "If Thou, O Lord, wilt mark iniquities, Lord, who shall stand it?" [9]

We conclude from what has been said of humility of mind, that to be truly humble, it is not necessary that we should impute to us faults that we have not. Veracity for-

[7] Ps. cxxix. [8] Eccli. ix. 1. [9] Ps. cxxix. 3.

bids us to support a false humility by fraud; it is sufficient that we know ourselves as we are in reality, to conceive a low and abject opinion of ourselves. Besides, there are in us the gifts of God which we should not despise, but we must despise the bad use we make of them, that we may remain free from vainglory and presumption, by which we attribute to ourselves what belongs to Him, who bestowed upon us during our lives His rich gifts of actual and habitual graces and the excellent endowments of our nature.

II. From the humility of mind flows, as from its source, humility of heart. Humility of the mind resides in the intellect, but humility of heart essentially resides in the will, for the knowledge of our nothingness engenders in the heart—unless it be depraved and controlled by the violence of unsubdued passions—sincere sentiments of humility towards God and neighbor, and a profound contempt of all that we may claim as our own in thoughts, words or actions, regarding the use we have made of God's favors. "Humility," says St. Thomas, "resides essentially in the will in so far as it represses the appetites of the soul that it may not tend inordinately towards our elevation," [10] but the knowledge of our nothingness and the consciousness of our dependence on God for all the good we recognize in ourselves, force us to the contempt of self and to credit our generous Father with all the good which He operates through us, the unworthy instruments of His liberality.

When we speak of the virtue of humility, we mean both humility of mind and humility of heart, and as such, humility is a virtue, which, through the exact knowledge one has of himself, inclines him to despise himself by interior and exterior acts before God and his neighbor. "According to us," says St. Jerome, "the proper of humility consists in that we subject ourselves in all things to God," [11] that is, by giving Him all the glory we see in ourselves or in others. This agrees with the doctrine of the Prince of the Apostles when he wrote: "Be you humbled therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in the time of visitation." [12]

[10] 2. 2 q. 161 a. 6. [11] *Ad Demet.*

[12] 1 Peter v. 6. *Cfr.* St. Thomas, 2. 2 q. 161 a. 2 to 3, a. 3, a. 6.

1. Must we now conclude from the doctrine laid down in this chapter that we should be blind to the good qualities or merits we see in us? Far from it, but we should not attribute them to ourselves, as if they were due to us, nor should we find in them a reason to glorify ourselves in our own eyes or in the eyes of others. "Now we have received," says the Apostle, "not the spirit of the world, but the spirit that is of God, that we may know the things that are given us from God." [13] Therefore also he could relate without vainglory the revelations he had received from heaven, [14] and the Blessed Virgin, without the slightest imperfection, praised and glorified the Lord for the great things He had done to her and she rejoiced exceedingly in God her Savior, because He had regarded the humility of His handmaid, for henceforth, she said, all generations would call her blessed, and because the promises made to Abraham had now been fulfilled. [15]

St. Gregory goes even a step farther: he reconciles humility with the knowledge of one's great deeds: "Although he that does great things," he says, "may conceive humble sentiments of himself, he knows nevertheless that what he does is great; for if he knew it not, he certainly would in no manner preserve it," [16] that is, he would not continue in the good he does nor strive to augment his merits by persevering in his good deeds. "No one," says St. Jerome, "could lose his merits when he attributes their cause, and the praise due to them, not to himself, but to his Creator." [17] Hence the conversion of the world by the preaching of the apostles and the conversion of hundreds of thousands of sinners through the instrumentality of the saints, was in no wise incompatible with their deep humility, for they gave the credit of their great success, to God alone, and in that manner they practised the injunction of the inspired writer: "The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God." [18]

What above all, the great as well as the lowly should avoid, is to seek glory and praise before men for the good they do, for not only is all the merit of their good actions

[13] 1 Cor. ii. 12. [14] 2 Cor. xii. 1 *seq.* [15] *Magn.*, Luke i. 46 *seq.*
[16] Mor., L. 26 c. 28. [17] *Ad Demet.* [18] Eccli. iii. 20.

thereby lost, but they render themselves guilty of vainglory, so scathingly condemned in Holy Writ, and furthermore their vainglory is a great obstacle to their progress in virtue. It leads to self-complacency and ultimately to hypocrisy. Aspirants to perfection must also be on their guard, against a more insidious enemy to their advancement in spiritual life, for to them may be applied the warning of St. Augustine, who says that: "Although is is easy to do without praises when none are obtained, it is nevertheless difficult not to find complacency in those that are received;" [19] for self-love insinuates itself surreptitiously into our most pious actions, unless we place a constant guard on the affections of our heart, and unless by continual watchfulness, aided thereto by the divine Spirit, we feel habitually inclined to welcome dishonor more than esteem, censure more than praise and ignominy more than worldly glory.

2. We now come to humility towards our neighbor, which consists in such a self-contempt that we esteem ourselves inferior to others and lower ourselves before all others, by acknowledging their superiority. We should not understand by this wilful humiliation, which the masters of spiritual life teach as essential to true humility, that superiors must do the will of those placed under their authority, but that submission or humility of mind and heart, which makes us so contemptible in our own estimation, should induce us to esteem all others as superior to ourselves. It would also be a mistake to suppose that this humility towards our neighbor regards only sinners, as if Christians leading a pious and devout life were free from the dangers of that pride, which was the beginning of the fall of our first parents and of that arrogance which precipitated a multitude of heavenly spirits into the depths of hell. "The man," says St. Gregory, "who amasses virtues without humility, is similar to him who would carry sand in his hands in the open wind," that is, unprotected from the wind. [20]

There is danger when any one elevates himself in the least above others, for he exposes himself to an error; "It

[19] Epist. 64 *ad Aurel.* [20] Super. Ps. iii. Poen.

is a great evil," says St. Bernard, "when you elevate yourself even a little above the truth, and when you prefer yourself in your thoughts to any other person, who possibly is your equal or superior." [21] There is no danger in abasing one's self more than is consistent with reality, says the same saint, and he proves it by a comparison. When one has to pass through a very low door, and he has to stoop to pass safely, he will not hurt himself if he inclines his head two or three inches more than necessary, but let him stoop even one inch less than necessary, he will hurt his forehead and bruise his head. The author of the *Imitation* is not satisfied with warning us against esteeming ourselves more than others; but he inculcates the necessity of abasing ourselves below all others if we aspire to perfection. "Do not imagine," he says, "that you have made the least progress as long as you do not esteem yourself to be the lowest of all creatures." [22]

Some one might here object that it is unreasonable to expect that we—and each one of us in particular—can judge ourselves more wicked and more sinful than the renowned criminals of past or present days. To that objection we answer that to get at the true heinousness of a crime, it is not enough to compare the exterior actions of two or more individuals, but we should also know their interior dispositions, and above all, the more or less supernatural help one receives from God. The teachings of the saints makes this clear. We read in the Chronicles of St. Francis of Assisi that he proclaimed as his certain conviction, that it was due to the many graces he had received from God that he had not become, as yet, the greatest sinner of the world, maintaining that if the greatest criminal of the world had received the graces he himself had received, that criminal would have served God better. "I am also persuaded," he added, "that if the Lord withdrew His helping hand, I would plunge headlong into the greatest crimes ever committed by any human being." St. Bernard gives us another consideration that will help us to esteem ourselves less than we do any criminal, we may propose to ourselves for a comparison: "Who knows," he says, "that he whom you regard

[21] In Cant. Serm. 37. [22] *Imitation*, Book 2, c. 2, v. 2.

as the vilest and most miserable of all men and whose criminal life inspires you with horror....will not yet become better than yourself, by a change due to the right hand of the Most High, if he is not it already in the eyes of the God of truth?" [23] Many sinners have become great saints and vile criminals exemplary Christians and holy men. St. Thomas sums up the reasons proper to induce us to consider ourselves more vile than any other human being, in the following manner: "When we prefer in our neighbor," he says, "what comes from God to what we have of ourselves, we cannot be deceived. One can without erring consider himself to be the vilest of all men, because of the secret defects he sees in himself and of the divine gifts which are hidden in others." [24] Of ourselves we are nothing and can do nothing that is good, and what evil inclination, what ingratitude and imperfection do we not find in all our actions, whilst in the vilest among the vile, we may see the work of the Holy Ghost and the good he has done under the influence of grace, as well as the natural qualities God has bestowed upon him! We may imagine that God is now pouring abundant graces into his soul to make of him an exemplary holy penitent, as He did of David, or a fervent believer as He did of the penitent thief, or an apostle of the true faith, as He did of the persecutor Saul of Tarsus.

III. Humility of heart towards our neighbor has several degrees of perfection, and the first degree is the one we have explained above, and which consists in despising ourselves and in esteeming ourselves less than anyone else, but the sentiments of humility, which have their source in the consciousness of our nothingness, must show themselves in all our intercourse with our neighbor. We should avoid the companionship of the wicked, unless duty or charity demand that we sacrifice ourselves for their eternal welfare; for, as we know our evil inclinations, we have reason to fear that unnecessary intercourse with them, would engulf us in the mire of sin. We therefore should seek the companionship of those whom we consider to excel in the practice of all virtues, that we may be benefited by their discourses and exemplary life. With such companions we will find it easy

[23] In *Can. Serm.*, 37. [24] 2. 2 q. 161 a. 3 to 2.

to esteem ourselves less than them; we will also value their opinions more than our own, love to ask their advice, give way to their manner of thinking and of reasoning, and we will guard ourselves against the least stubbornness in defending our own judgments of persons, things and events, preferring always whatever others think, say or do. As a natural consequence, we will likewise adopt the desire and will of others in preference to our own.

The second degree of humility consists in bearing patiently the contempt of everyone, as deserved by us, because of our innumerable sins and our lack of what deserves esteem and praise. We should be convinced and acknowledge that there is nothing good in us. Should we not then also suffer peacefully, if others form of us the same judgment we have of ourselves? To think otherwise is to admit that our humility is not sincere. One may feel the sting of rebuke, of being despised or insulted—and that only proves that his humility is not entirely perfect—but if he is conscious that the contempt of others is well merited, his humility is at least sincere and not a mere sham of hypocrisy. "We know of many," says St. Gregory, "who acknowledge themselves sinners when they are not reprimanded, but when they are, they excuse themselves through fear of appearing guilty. If their humility be truthful when they accuse themselves, they would not deny that they are sinners, when others reproach them with what they seem freely to confess." [25]

The third and most perfect degree of humility towards our neighbor consists in such an utmost and perfect contempt of ourselves that we suffer with joy the deepest humiliations. This perfect humility is taught us by our Savior in the last beatitude: "Blessed are ye when they shall revile you and persecute you and speak all that is evil against you, untruly for My sake. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven." [26] We should also desire this heroic humility, not only in view of the great promise attached to it, but also because through it, we become more like our divine Master, who was clothed with our iniquities as with a garment, who was rebuked and reviled, was con-

[25] Moral., L. 22, c. 10. [26] Matt. v. 11.

demned to the ignominious death of the cross as the vilest criminal, and who died, suspended on the cross between two thieves, as the most wicked of the three.

IV. We will now consider humility in our exterior conduct, because it is a test of the sincerity of our interior humility; for we should not lose sight of the truth that all exterior humility should be founded on humility of mind and humility of heart, without which exterior humility is a detestable hypocrisy, and furthermore, true and sincere interior humility makes the practice of exterior humility natural and easy, especially so, if one have already arrived at the second degree of humility.

Another preliminary remark, which we consider very useful, before we attempt the consideration of the different acts of exterior humility, is that all virtues should be practiced whenever occasion presents itself, if we wish to maintain their purity and vigor, and therefore exterior humility must correspond to interior humility, for humiliations promote humility. Hence, if we are humbled or humble ourselves, it adds to the sincerity, life and firmness of our humility of mind and heart.

St. Thomas, as usual, teaches us clearly and with precision in what our exterior conduct must conform to the sentiments of the heart, based upon the knowledge of our nothingness. "From interior humility," he says, "proceed certain exterior signs, such as words, actions and bearing, which manifest—as is the case with other virtues—what lies hidden within." [27]

1. Humility in speech. Whosoever aspires to become truly humble must avoid whatever may bring him praise, and as vanity and self-love lurk so often in our remarks about what concerns our person, our relatives and friends, our capacities and our doings, we are particularly reminded by the most prudent masters of spiritual life of the saying: "Of thyself speak neither good nor evil," unless duty or the good of thy neighbor requires it. To praise one's self is unworthy of a Christian, who has learned that honor, praise and glory belong to God alone, the Author of whatever good there is in us; and therefore Holy Writ warns us say-

[27] 2. 2. q. 161 a. 6.

ing: "Let another praise thee, and not thy own mouth; a stranger, and not thy own lips."[28] It is also next to impossible not to speak of ourselves without vanity or self-complacency, regarding our ability and cleverness in extricating ourselves from the evil consequences of an act, for which we take all the blame. True, Holy Scripture also says: "The just man accuses himself first;"[29] but this must be understood of the wise and just man, who has recourse to his spiritual director or confessor, to whom he lays open the wounds of his heart, to find a cure for his spiritual ailments. Another fault, which every Christian who tends to perfection should carefully avoid, is to excuse one's self, when any fault is laid to his charge; for even if, in a particular case, he may not be guilty, the remembrance of his many sins and imperfections of his life, should induce him to accept with joy, the undeserved humiliation in punishment of sinful deeds which escaped censure.

2. Humility in action. Humility in our actions consists in this that, exteriorly, we act in conformity with the true opinion we have formed of ourselves: therefore it behooves us to seek occupations of an inferior dignity or such duties, to which no honor is attached; likewise to seek the lowest place at table as Our Lord has recommended; but discipline and order in the family and in religious communities, demand that each one should occupy the place assigned to him or belonging to him. One should also avoid excesses, especially in those actions that would bring ridicule upon our holy religion. We should not without a special inspiration from God, imitate the saints who passed for demented, to attract upon themselves the contempt of the people at large, or who went about unkempt and in rags to be hooted at or to inspire a horror of their personal demeanor and appearance. Acts of humility combined with charity, such as visiting the poor and the sick, are especially recommended to the rich and to those who are placed in authority or occupy positions of honor and dignity, but it should not be done in spirit of ostentation.

We should especially practice humility in the acceptance of the low and mean duties which superiors impose upon

[28] Prov. xxvii. 2. [29] Prov. xviii. 18.

those under their charge, and offer ourselves spontaneously, when they call upon volunteers for a base or common work, which we are not strictly bound to accept, provided one knows himself capable of performing it.

There are besides, many acts of humility we can perform when humiliations are not sought, but by which we are frequently confronted through the ill-will or inattention of those with whom we dwell, or with whom we have intercourse or come in contact with, in our daily occupations. We feel keenly humiliated, and often without reason, when our companions or equals receive marks of attention or are preferred to us. We are so sensitive, that we hold the least inattention as a slight or a contempt. How can we then accept the just reproof of our conduct with sincere humility? In the busy world the well-disposed and the most faithful Christians are subject to raillery, ridicule, misrepresentations, back-biting and the calumny of the wicked; and notwithstanding, the followers of the meek Savior must treat them with consideration, condone their injustices and joyfully accept whatever humiliations come to their lot at the hands of their persecutors, as well-merited punishments for their own sins and imperfections. These unexpected and unforeseen humiliations are the more trying, because they are in nowise voluntary, and to them may be applied the adage of Holy Writ: "Gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliations." [30]

3. Humility in our bearing, that is, modesty in our gestures, in our looks, in our walk, in the intonation of the voice, etc., contribute greatly to interior humility of the mind and heart; but in this we must avoid exaggeration, vainglory and hypocrisy, for our exterior demeanor should be a reflection of the intimate sentiments of the soul.

V. We have now explained in what humility consists and how we can attain it and what we must avoid to keep it in all its purity. We shall now consider the excellence of the virtue of humility, by comparing it with the other moral virtues.

To arrive at perfection, we need the practice of the moral virtues, for charity in which perfection consists, can

[30] Eccle. ii. 5.

not be reached without the practice of the moral virtues. The spiritual life, which has for end the perfection of our souls, may be considered as a sacred edifice, which is raised slowly from its foundation to its completion: it reaches from earth to the very throne of God. The stones of the building are the moral virtues and on them the superstructure with its ornamentations, its symmetry, its lofty spires, its beauty and perfection rest. The moral virtues in the inferior part of the sacred edifice, are not all of the same quality, for in any building the hardest and largest stones are used in the foundation. Now, according to the masters of spiritual life, humility is the foundation on which the temple of holiness is built. "Do you desire," says St. Augustine, "to build a lofty edifice? Think first of laying down the foundation of humility;" [31] for, according to St. Cyprian, "The foundation of holiness has always been humility: a proud structure could not remain standing even in heaven." [32] St. John Chrysostom had already taught that humility is the foundation of all good works and that there can be no virtue without humility, and furthermore he asserts that: "Whosoever has laid down that solid foundation (*i. e.*, of humility), may build as high as he wills." [33] Humility is then the indispensable and necessary foundation of a true and healthy spiritual life. He who builds on anything else, builds on moving sand, and the edifice, no matter how pretentious and elaborate it may be, is bound to crumble and fall.

If we leave aside the arguments, which the saints have deduced from comparing our spiritual life with the lofty structures, built by the hand of man, we will find in Holy Scriptures direct proofs to convince us that without humility we can make no progress in virtue. The reason is found in that fundamental truth, taught us by Our Lord: "Without Me you can do nothing, [34] and enunciated again by St. Paul, when he says: "Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves as of ourselves, but our sufficiency comes from God." [35] Without God we can do nothing that tends to our spiritual progress and He refuses

[31] *De Verbo Domini*, Serm. 10. [32] In *Nativit. Domini.*
[33] In *Gen. Hom.*, 35. *Cfr.* St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 161 a. 5.
[34] John xv. 5. [35] 2 Cor. iii. 5.

His help to the proud, whilst He enriches the humble with abundant graces: "God resisteth the proud, and gives His grace to the humble," [36] says St. James. Our good judgment teaches the propriety of it, for our good Lord necessarily demands recognition of the favors we receive from Him, but the proud attribute to themselves, if not all, at least a great portion of their good qualities and good deeds, whilst the truly humble cease not to give thanks to their heavenly Father for all that they are and all that they have; and they implore His constant aid in all their undertakings. Who asks assistance, but he who is conscious of his helplessness and his miseries? "This humble esteem of ourselves," says St. Cyril, "this acknowledgment of our indigence, obtains immediately an abundance of divine graces and help from above." [37]

Prayer is all-powerful because its efficacy rests on the promises of a faithful and almighty God, who cannot deceive us; but the proud cannot pray with the proper dispositions, for they glory in their deeds of justice and benevolence, and humble souls acknowledge their need, and rely upon the merciful God for help in all their troubles and necessities. We have an example of two prayers, in the Pharisee and in the publican, one haughty and the other humble. What else could be expected than that the first would be rejected and the second heard?

Finally, humility is the guardian of the virtues we have already acquired, and with the loss of humility, we gradually lose all other virtues, no matter what may be their perfection. We may add that our humility should be proportionate to the perfection of our soul, and therefore, the greater our perfection, the greater also should be our humility. Perfection is acquired and maintained by profound humility and the whole superstructure of sanctity, built on a strong foundation of humility, totters, crumbles and falls, when the foundation gives way. A proud thought hurled from heaven Lucifer, not less than the lowest of the fallen angels. Therefore St. Jerome wrote to Calancia: "Let nothing be more precious in your eyes, let nothing be more dear to you than humility, for it is the principal custodian

[36] James iv. 6.

[37] L. 6 in Joan, c. 21.

and as it were, the guardian of all virtues." Why is it thus? For no other reason than that our Savior has declared and warned us, that "He that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." [38] From our Savior's warning just quoted, we deduce the following practices which regard mainly our humility towards God. The three degrees of humility, already explained, refer especially to humility towards our neighbor in all our intercourse with him.

1. When we are tempted by thoughts of vainglory, let us place ourselves immediately in the presence of the Supreme Majesty, the Lord of heaven and earth, and acknowledge before Him, that we are but nothingness, yea more vile and hideous than nothingness, because of our sins. The more we despise ourselves, the more we should glorify our heavenly Father, who is all-good and who although bountiful in bestowing His richest gifts, remains infinitely rich. 2. We should rejoice that God is all and that we are nothing, considering ourselves exceedingly happy to serve such a bountiful Master. 3. We should attribute to God all the endowments of our soul and body, the noble qualities we possess and the good we may have been able to perform with His aid, and we should be fully convinced that if He had dealt as liberally with others, bestowing upon them the same natural talents, and the same spiritual favors, they would have been more faithful than we have been in the observance of all our obligations and in acts of charity towards our neighbor. Therefore, what useless instruments we have been in the designs of God upon us! 4. We should make sincere amends for the pride, by which we and our brethren of the human race, have deprived and robbed God of the glory due to Him alone, by arrogating to ourselves a share of the good that is done in the world. 5. We should also determine to seek henceforth, in all things, the honor and glory of our Maker, and joyfully to sacrifice our whole being, our energies, our ease and comfort and all we possess, if thereby we are able to glorify His holy name. To Him all honor, praise and glory forever and ever, Amen.

IV. Modesty, so-called, because it moderates and regu-

[38] Matt. xxiii. 12.

lates the exterior life of man in his gait, bearing and demeanor, is not a special virtue, if we adopt the generally accepted meaning of the word. Greek and Roman philosophers did not agree in what modesty consisted. Cicero and Aristotle attributed to modesty as proper to it: humility, diligence, meekness, simplicity and pleasing manners; but the last component part of it was omitted by Cicero.[39] St. Paul, it seems, used the word in his epistles,[40] to denote the interior humility, meekness and patience observed always and everywhere in one's words, gestures, gait, dress and bearing; and he inculcated that modesty in the minds of the Christians as a means to draw all people to the sweet yoke of Christ. Thus, one may be said to be modest, when his humility, simplicity, patience and meekness and all other Christian virtues are so blended with temperance and moderation as to give no offence to any one, and that his words, gestures, looks, bearing, gait and dress, as well as all his dealings with his neighbor, are but a conspicuous and clear mirror in which his virtues are faithfully reflected.

(For further explanation regarding the virtue of modesty see: The sense of sight, Part II, Article I, Chapter III.)

[39] St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 160 a. 2. [40] Gal. v. 23; Phil. iv. 5.

ARTICLE III

Patience

Humility, Patience and Meekness are Closely Related—I. Fear and Sadness—Fortitude Overcomes Fear and Patience Sadness—In What Patience Consists—Its Utility and Necessity—II. Motives to Suffer with Patience all Tribulations: (a) Necessary for Sinners; (b) For the Lukewarm; (c) For the Just—III. The Example of Jesus Spurred the Apostles and Martyrs on to the Heroic Deeds of Patience—IV. The Eternal Reward of Patience—V. Humility of Suffering Necessary for all Men—VI. Three Degrees of Perfection: 1. To Suffer Afflictions without Sadness; 2. To Suffer with Joy; 3. To Prefer Afflictions to be More Like Our Model, Christ Our Savior—Conclusion.

The virtue of patience is so closely related to humility, that the latter may be called the parent of the former, as it fosters and feeds it, and besides, humility makes the practice of patience as well as of meekness, wonderfully easy and even agreeable. Therefore, we have chosen to speak first of patience and afterward of meekness. Humility, which is opposed to pride, moderates the good opinion or esteem we conceive of our good qualities and laudable deeds; patience moderates sadness amidst the evils that oppress the soul, and meekness combats the passion of anger in the midst of all kinds of affronts, and thus the three virtues depend on temperance, which, considered as a cardinal virtue, condemns all excesses, because it regulates and tempers the sentiments of the heart with regard to self-esteem or self-praise, sadness and anger; but when heroic efforts are required to remain humble, patient and meek, as when one is deeply humiliated by seeing others preferred to himself or is depressed by his reverses due to the persistent ill-will of others, or when serious sufferings or afflictions of body or soul have overtaken him, or when one has been unjustly deprived of what he holds most dear, or has been reviled, or shamefully calumniated, then the virtue of fortitude comes to his aid to overcome his innate pride, the cowardly sad-

ness of his heart and the unbridled passion of anger; and thus the three closely allied virtues become the potential virtues of fortitude, which sustains and encourages them in the otherwise unequal struggle between virtue and vice.

I. To fully understand the nature of patience, which we shall now attempt to explain, we have to compare fear with sadness. Fear is a passion brought about by an evil which threatens us, and sadness is caused by an evil that has already overtaken us. The virtue of fortitude directly combats and overcomes fear, and patience moderates sadness. Thus the strong and valiant soldier of Christ braves through fortitude the greatest dangers, yea death itself in the performance of his duties, whilst patience aids him to suffer with tranquillity of mind and peace of heart whatever present evils of body or soul may afflict him, so that with the Apostle he can say: "I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulations." [1]

Patience is the necessary virtue of every Christian, for we live in a valley of tears, and therefore, we are all subject to all sorts of afflictions, such as poverty, sickness, the separation by death from friends and relatives, the loss of our worldly goods, of our honor and of our reputation, and hence a virtue is necessary to keep our mind from the baneful effects of that "Sadness, which hath killed many and there is no profit in it," says Holy Writ. [2] "Instead of giving up our souls to sadness, we should keep up a cheerful heart which is a continual peace." [3] St. Bernard gives a reason why patience is especially necessary to those who strive for perfection, although he refers principally to bodily pains. "The pains which the Lord sends," he says, "down the pride of our voluptuous flesh and fortify the virtues of the soul; the body loses by its exuberant humors and the mind acquires virtues which it did not possess;" [4] for whatever weakens the body purifies the soul. St. James teaches us that patience leads to perfection, for the trials of our faith, if properly surmounted, engender patience, and our good work, which is done in affliction and supported with patience, makes us "Perfect and entire, so that nothing be

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 4.
[2] Eccli. xxx. 25.
[3] *Ibid., seq.*
[4] Serm. 10 in *Coen. Dom.*

wanting in us." [5] This made St. Francis de Sales say: "The most solid virtues are those that are born in the midst of affliction."[6]

II. Afflictions and tribulations are useful to all people, no matter what their condition may be. We refer here especially to the afflictions that come to us from the part of God, or from the part of man with God's permission, for they are of greater utility than the afflictions which have their source in our own will, principally because those we seek are less meritorious, as a natural inclination usually impels us to voluntary mortifications and afflictions, and God is better served when His will is obeyed than when we follow our own.

1. Sinners should consider as a heavenly boon the afflictions God sends them, for they are a remedy for their spiritual ailments. Why would they be saddened at temporal evils which are for their spiritual good, by curing the mortal malady of their soul? "Sin," says St. John Chrysostom, "is a purulent ulcer. As he who has an ulcer, sees his sore getting worse, unless it be operated on, likewise, if he that has sinned is not chastised, he becomes exceedingly miserable." [7] Is the heart of a sinner not usually hardened by prosperity and softened by adversity? What brought the prodigal son back to his father's house to seek his pardon, but hunger and thirst, nakedness and the humiliations and misery that befell him? But to derive fruit from tribulations, the sinner should acknowledge that he deserves them, for if he complains against Divine Justice, his condition becomes hopeless. "Sinners," says St. Francis de Sales, "must imitate the penitent thief," [8] who admitted his just punishment, when he said: "We receive the due reward of our deeds." [9] "Man," says St. Augustine, "must regard the Lord as a charitable physician, and see in all tribulation, not the reproachful chastisement, but the salutary remedy." [10]

2. Now Christians, who may be classed as just, because they observe all the commandments and strive to avoid all mortal sins, but who are lukewarm in God's service, deserve

[5] James i. 2-4. [6] Letter 659 to a widow. [7] *Hom. ad Pop. Antioch.*
[8] Luke xxiii. 4. [9] Serm. 2 Good Friday. [10] In Ps. xxi.

the reprehension which St. John was ordered to write to the angel of the Church of Laodicea: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot....I would that thou wert cold or hot, but because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth." [11] What is taught here should make the lukewarm tremble with fear, for the Bishop of Laodicea is told that his state of lukewarmness is a spiritual disease more dangerous than if he were in a state of sin, not because lukewarmness among Christians is in itself a state more wicked than the state of sin, but because he who is cold is more apt and better disposed, to amend his sinful life, than the lukewarm Christian, who through his indifference and lack of energy easily falls into the worst of crimes from which little amendment can be expected. "We see often," says Cassian, "that from cold and carnal people, that is from worldlings and Pagans, some reach spiritual fervor; we absolutely see no one who from lukewarm (Christians)....reach it." [12] We easily understand the reason of the warning sent to the bishop by St. John, if we compare the state of lukewarm souls to a human body without energy or life, that is, a sluggish and inert body; for such a body, if attacked by a mortal malady, will rarely escape dissolution and death, whilst a vigorous and strong body can more easily shake off the danger. Likewise tepid souls through over-confidence, presumption and the contempt of divine things, if they once fall into sin, become well-nigh incurable and their state hopeless; for nothing will move them except an extraordinary visitation from the Father of mercies in the shape of a severe sickness, the loss of friends or relatives, the loss of fortune or similar calamities. For tepid souls, tribulations and afflictions seem to be the only hope to draw them from their deadly lethargy. Would to God that when afflictions come, they may see in them the kind rebuke of a merciful and bountiful God, and that they may understand the necessity of leading holy and virtuous lives, by serving God with fervor and entire resignation to His holy will!

3. Just and fervent souls derive great spiritual benefits

[11] Apoc. iii. 15. [12] Collat. IV, c. 19.

from tribulations, provided their patience and resignation to the will of God be sincere and complete. They have to be tried like gold in the fire, they must be purified from the dross of all worldly affections, that they may advance without hindrance in the way of perfection. All worldly attachments, pride and vainglory, self-love and an excessive care of the body, of its health and strength, are heavy loads to carry with safety over the rugged road to the summit of perfection. Afflictions in the hands of God are sent by Him to try the constancy of His faithful servants: "As silver is tried by fire, and gold in the furnace, so the Lord tries the heart."[13] The elder Tobias was struck blind, although he was already acceptable in God's sight, as the angel Raphael assured him, when he said: "Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation" (*i. e.,* trials by affliction) "should prove thee."[14] Nevertheless, great tribulations were his lot, because we usually derive more good from afflictions than from spiritual consolations, and therefore St. Ephrem, St. Teresa and many others among our most eminent saints, seemingly judged themselves unworthy of God's best favors, because He took away from them all tribulations, and thereby also the occasion of meriting.

The best afflictions, says St. Francis de Sales,[15] are those that also deeply humiliate us, for sorrows and tribulations without humiliation, are apt to inject the venom of insidious vainglory in the minds of the unwary, and thus they puff up the heart instead of humiliating it; but when one suffers tribulations without honors or better still when afflictions render one vile in the eyes of others, oh! then, what an invaluable occasion to exercise patience, humility, modesty and meekness of heart. Therefore St. Paul rejoiced because he and his companions had been "made as a refuse of this world and the offscouring of all."[16]

Why were such men as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job, Tobias, the Apostles, the Christian martyrs and many saints so greatly afflicted? Because "The Lord chastiseth whom He loveth,"[17] and because, "He striketh those He regards

[13] Prov. xvii. 3. [14] Tob. xii. 13. [15] Letter 683.
[16] 1 Cor. iv. 13. [17] Heb. xii. 6.

as His children." "Are you perhaps excepted?" continues St. Augustine. "If He spares you the trials of tribulation, it is a sign that you are not of the number of His children." [18] Let us weigh well the teaching of this great saint, the scourge of the heretics of his time, and we will rejoice at humiliations and tribulations, bearing in mind that if they are supported with resignation, they will promptly and safely lead to perfection. "Son," says the Holy Ghost, "when thou comest to the service of God....prepare thy soul for temptation (trials) . . . wait on God with patience; join thyself to God and endure, that thy (spiritual) life may be increased in the latter end....take all that shall be brought upon thee, and in thy sorrow endure and in thy humiliation keep patience. Woe to them that have lost patience." [19]

4. Although sadness is in itself not a sin, for "The sorrow that is according to God worketh penance, steadfast unto salvation, but the sorrow of the world worketh death;" [20] nevertheless, sadness has only two good effects: mercy and penitence, and a number of evil effects, which it produces in the soul: anguish, sloth, indignation, jealousy, envy, impatience, and ultimately despair and diffidence of God.

Immoderate sadness disquiets the soul, causes inordinate fear, disgust with prayer, benumbs and overwhelms the brain, deprives the soul of counsel, of determination, of judgment and of courage and exhausts one's strength. [21]

III. The example of our Savior, more than all other considerations, should move Christians to endure with the utmost patience, whatever afflictions may befall them. We are only Christians in so far as the sentiments of our heart and our whole lives correspond to the teachings of Christ, and to His exemplary life. Thus Jesus Himself taught us: "I am the light of the world," He said. "He that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life;" [22] and He summed up that essential doctrine, when

[18] De Pastor. [19] Eccli. 2. [20] 2 Cor. vii. 10.

[21] St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to a Devout Life*, ch. 12.

[22] John viii. 12.

on the eve of His death He said to His Apostles: "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also." [23] That we should also follow the Savior's example, in enduring tribulations and afflictions with patience, even when we suffer unjustly, is clearly inculcated by the Prince of the Apostles: "This is thankworthy (acceptable), if for conscience (or through fidelity towards God) a man endureth sorrows, (although suffering wrongfully) for what glory is it, if committing sin, and being buffeted (for it,) you endure....Christ also suffered for us, giving you an example that you follow His steps." [24] As to those who frequently meditate on the private and public life of our Savior and especially on His sorrowful Passion, they hardly need to be reminded of Our Lord's patience under sufferings of body and soul. What pains, what sorrows, what humiliations did He not endure with admirable patience, from His birth to His last sigh on the Cross! Is there any mental or bodily affliction—if we except the consequences of personal sin—that ever fell to the lot of man, that Jesus did not welcome? We believe that the slightest humility or a sigh from Him would have been sufficient to redeem the world, as the merit of either would have been of an infinite value, and therefore the sorrows of our Redeemer's life of self-abnegation, can only be explained by His desire to attest His great love for us, to encourage us by His example and to serve as our model on all possible occasions, in which patient endurance is required.

Can you rightfully complain, you wage-earners, that your life is one of constant toil and that you can only eke out a miserable existence for yourselves and families? Jesus has chosen to live your life up to His thirtieth year. Are you neglected or contemned or have you been unjustly dealt with? Look up to your model: your Savior has chosen to be reviled, ignominiously treated and has been condemned to death, as a man more despicable than the murderer Barabbas. Are bodily pains, poverty, dishonor or calumny at the hands of your fellowman, your lot? Again your Savior has sympathized with you, and He has gone before you that you may follow in His footsteps, and imitate Him in His private

[23] John xiii. 15. [24] 1 Peter ii. 19, *seq.*

and public life, but especially in His painful journey from Pilate's house to Calvary. Is anguish of mind or sorrow of heart your trial? Jesus' soul was sorrowful unto death. Have you reason to complain of the ingratitude and neglect of those whom you have favored and befriended? Jesus has during His whole lifetime been a martyr of love for His ungrateful children, and even His disciples abandoned Him and fled, when their faithful constancy would have been a balm to His aching heart. Have you been unjustly deprived of your worldly goods, of your good name and the esteem you enjoyed among your friends and acquaintances? Jesus was stripped of His garments, and those who had acclaimed Him as the Son of David, as blessed and as coming in the name of the Lord, accuse Him thereafter as a seducer of the people. He was clothed in derision with a purple mantle and mockingly crowned with a crown of thorns. Your sufferings are unbearable, you say; but your bones have not been laid bare by a bloody flagellation, nor have you bled to death, hanging between two thieves in the sight of the inhabitants of a large city.

We find sometimes among the followers of Christ pious souls, who complain that God has abandoned them, but at least some consolation from heaven sweetens their cup of bitterness. If their abandonment is real, let them look up to the Cross, and see Jesus in the midst of unspeakable tortures, imploringly raise His pitiful eyes to heaven, and they will hear Him exclaim in accents of the direst distress: "My God, My God, why hast Thou abandoned Me?" Jesus for three long hours hangs on the Cross, bleeding to death, and even the slightest consolation from heaven is denied Him. Was the soul of Jesus so saddened in this saddest of all His afflictions—more painful to Him than all He had hitherto endured—that He forgot His mission in His last agony? Far from it. He prays for His enemies; He thirsts for the salvation of us all; He gives up His own Mother to us as our Mother and mediatrix between us sinners and Himself, the Victor over death and hell; He forgives the penitent thief; announces that He has accomplished all that His Father demands for our redemption, and the supreme moment, the final sacrifice only arrives, when, having first

delivered His soul into the hands of His Father, He bows His head with full and entire resignation to the will of Him, who sent Him. Thus in spite of His dereliction and the aridity of His soul, more to be dreaded than all the pains of His long agony, all His words and actions were, we may say, stamped with love for His guilty children.

Some one may perhaps remark that Jesus was God, and that He was strengthened by an invisible power; but the Savior during His passion was left to His human power; therefore He fell from fatigue and exhaustion several times under the weight of the Cross, and if His life was miraculously preserved, because His Father so willed it, during His agony in the garden, when an angel of heaven was sent to comfort Him, and probably again thereafter during the flagellation, the carrying of the cross and during His three hours agony on Calvary, this was solely done that by the preservation of His strength, His sufferings might be the longer protracted.

IV. If the example of our benign Redeemer be not sufficient, to make us suffer with Him and for Him with the utmost resignation, let the reward attached to carrying our cross with patient endurance, at least strengthen and animate us. Even if no recompense had been promised to those who humbly submit to trials and tribulations sent them by a merciful Father, we should still be bound to serve Him in poverty, distress and in all sorts of afflictions, because He so wills it to try our fidelity in His service; but in His infinite mercy and bounty, He has promised a reward beyond all human comprehension for trials, tribulations and afflictions borne for His sake: He offers us a kingdom and a crown of immortal glory; and poverty, humiliations and sorrows patiently endured will buy them. "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are ye that hunger now, for you shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for you shall laugh. Blessed shall you be, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate (that is ostracize and shun you) and shall reproach you.... Be glad in that day and rejoice, for behold, your reward is great in heaven." [25]

[25] Luke vi. 20 *seq.* *Cfr.* Matt. v. 5.

V. If any one should object that fear of impending evil and sadness over misfortunes are natural, and form as it were, a part of our human nature, and therefore we should strive to guard against afflictions, pains and sorrows, we will answer that moderate fear and sorrow, because of temporal afflictions, are not sinful, but what we must condemn, is peevishness, fretfulness, impatience and anxiety of mind and heart, and above all, to complain that the justice of God is wicked and blasphemous. Impatience only further aggravates and distresses the soul, while patience—especially if afflictions be suffered with resignation to the will of God—assuages the sorrow of the heart, and makes even bodily pains seem light or at least bearable. The sharp edge of bodily pains is worn off by our willingness to suffer through the heavenly consolations that accompany the perfect resignation to God's holy will; whilst reluctance to sufferings sharpens their edge and makes them cut deeper into the soul. As to sadness arising from whatever source, it depends only on us to moderate it and even to convert it into peace of mind, that consoles the heart and hardens it against temptations. For the perfect Christian there is no evil but sin, and that he deplores in himself as well as in his fellow-men, but as to all other so-called evils that cannot deprive him of the friendship of God, he looks upon them as negligible, unless he can utilize them, as a means to satisfy for his sins and to please his heavenly Father.

VI. Although patience, in all kinds of trials and tribulations is laudable and meritorious before God, there are several degrees of patience, as there are degrees in the fortitude required in overcoming the afflictions, that threaten the peace of the soul, in its entire conformity to the will of God. Thus when Satan attempted to vanquish the patience of Job, he first had recourse to the destruction of the holy man's possessions, and to the loss of all that was most dear to him, his sons and daughters; but Job's only answer to the fiendish attempts of hell was: "God hath given; God hath taken away, may His holy will be done." Satan, after his first unsuccessful attempt, went before God and asked leave to torment Job in his body. The permission having been obtained, Satan afflicted Job with ulcers from head to foot,

This was adding the deepest humiliation to the most unbearable pain; for Holy Scripture says that: "Job took a potsherd and scraped away the corrupt matter, sitting on a dunghill." [26] The holy man's patience remained still invincible, and his answer to his wife, who chided him for his faith and confidence in God, simply was: "If we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil?" [27] With regard to the sacrifices we willingly make by accepting them without complaint, without peevishness and fretfulness, there are innumerable degrees in patience, but they are not specifically different. The perfection of patience consists in this that the sufferer, no matter what his affliction may be, remains perfectly resigned to God's holy will. Thus our Blessed Savior could say: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death;" [28] He could pray to His Father: "Remove this chalice from Me," and notwithstanding He retained the perfection of patience, when He said: "But not what I will, but what Thou wilt." [29] Job also asked with tears of sorrow to be freed from his afflictions; [30] but recognizes the wisdom of God in all His works. [31] Was Job ignorant of the trials that afflicted him? No; there is sadness in all his words during his conversation with his friends, and he bemoaned his miserable lot; but sadness did not alter his confidence in God's goodness, nor in the justice of His dealings, with regard to the tribulations that weighed so heavily upon him.

Must we, in order to reach the perfection of patience, strive to rejoice at an evil that torments us? To rejoice that the will of God is done in all His judgments, is undoubtedly very laudable. We should also strive to rejoice when exterior tribulations have been permitted or ordained by God for our greater perfection, like the Apostles who went rejoicing because they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus;" [32] but is it praiseworthy to rejoice because aridities have taken the place of the heavenly consolations we have found hitherto in the compliance with our duties? By what kind of rejoicing can we replace the sadness we experience when we see thousands of Christians

[26] Job ii. 3. [27] *Ibid.*, 10. [28] Matt. xiv. 34.
[29] *Ibid.*, 36. [30] Job. x. [31] *Ibid.*, 12 *seq.* [32] Acts v. 41.

run after the frivolous goods of this world, riches, pleasures and glory, trample under foot the precepts of the Gospel, and make void for themselves the merits of the passion and death of our Savior?

The thought that "Whom the Lord loveth He chastiseth, and He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth,"[33] will go far to console us in our bodily pains, and in the torments that come from the ill-will of the wicked. We may even for a greater perfection welcome them and desire them, if it is the will of God, but we are not advised to become insensible to bodily and mental afflictions, for God demands not of us impossibilities, or things contrary to our nature. When we read about the joys and delights that some martyrs experienced in the midst of atrocious pains, we must attribute it to a miraculous intervention of our compassionate God; but we should never pray for miraculous favors, unless we add to our prayer: "Not as I will but as Thou wilt."

To understand full well the perfection of patience, we should first be intimately convinced that moderate sadness is neither good nor bad, and depends for the evil or good there is in it on the affections it produces in the soul, says St. Francis de Sales.[34] Sadness is, according to the same saint, a sorrow of the soul which we experience, because of the evil which is in us and in spite of us. The evil may be exterior, like poverty, sickness and contempt, or interior, like ignorance, aridity and temptation. The soul is displeased at the evil and sadness is the consequence; spontaneously the soul seeks to be delivered from it, and so far the soul is right, for everyone desires what is good and flees from what he thinks is evil.[35] If one suffer the evil with peace of mind and soul, for God's sake, he may be said to have reached the first degree of patience, and this is still true even if he seek from God relief from his sufferings.

Nevertheless, as St. Augustine well remarks: "If you pretend to escape all afflictions, you are not yet a Christian; for indeed what would be the meaning of that saying of the Apostles: All those who wish to live piously in Jesus

[33] Heb. xii. 6.

[34] *Introduction to a Devout Life,* ch. xi. [35] *Ibid.*

Christ, shall suffer persecution? Therefore, he who desires trials and tribulations, because such is the will of God, has arrived at a higher degree than he who simply submits to afflictions without disquietude.

Finally, if one desire tribulations in order to be more like his Model, Jesus Christ, and he can say with all sincerity, that if it were God's holy will, he would rather die than to live without suffering, but would rather live longer to be able to suffer more, he may be said to have arrived at the highest degree of Christian perfection, provided he desires afflictions in order to be more like Jesus, his Model. Thus St. Teresa used to repeat frequently in her prayers: "To suffer or die."

To arrive at a high degree of Christian patience, our heart should be free from all inordinate affections of love, hatred, vainglory, presumption, envy, covetousness, fear, ennui, enjoyment, etc. We should be perfectly indifferent to all things and to all that may happen, provided it concern nowise the honor of God and the salvation of souls. This indifference should extend to all the temporal advantages or losses, such as riches or poverty, health or sickness, honors or dishonor, praise or contempt, a long or a short life; for, if subsequently we lose the so-called worldly advantages—whatever be the origin or cause thereof—we are then proof against adversities.

We have quoted St. Francis de Sales, who teaches that sadness can produce but two good effects, penitence and mercy. Yes, there is a sorrow that is of God, for "The sorrow that is of God worketh penance steadfast unto salvation." [36] By it we grieve for our sins and for all the spiritual evils that have ever come upon the world. "Of all the losses," says St. John Chrysostom, "which can happen to a man, it is only those caused by sin which can be repaired by sadness and regret, and therefore in everything else but sin, it is unprofitable; because it rather augments than diminishes our losses; but the losses caused by sin are entirely repaired by repentance for it, and hence for sin alone should we grieve." That sadness or sorrow for sin, which is nothing else than penitence, by which we afflict our

[36] 2 Cor. vii. 10.

souls, obtains mercy from God, and if it be altogether lacking, nothing else can take its place.

There are other reasons that make sadness justifiable and even profitable, as when it proceeds from an ardent desire of perfection, and the sadness for having made so little advancement in virtue, is acceptable to God; for "Blessed are those that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled." [37]

Finally, the consciousness of the joys of heaven of which we are deprived as long as we live in this terrestrial exile, is another just cause for regret and sadness. "Woe to me that my exile is prolonged," [38] sighed the royal Prophet. The fire in the soul that sighs for union with its God, whom it loves so ardently, burns away all the dross of earthly affections that still cling to it. Do you desire to find out whether your sorrow is from God? Here are the signs given by Cassian and other masters of spiritual life: It is obedient, kind, humble, meek and patient, whilst the "Sorrow of the world, which is not of God and worketh death," [39] is fretful, rude, impatient and full of bitterness, and causeth disquietude, discouragement and despair.

(a) To preserve patience it is useful to foresee the evils that may befall us, that we may harden ourselves against sadness by a strong determination rather to die than to attract God's displeasure by disquietude, which, says St. Francis de Sales, is after sin the greatest of evils; for disquietude, if not subdued, causes distress and anguish, which leave the soul open to the severest temptations of the evil one, as counsel, judgment and determination are lacking to a soul saddened by reverses.

(b) The second means by which we may preserve patience, is to lead holy and pious lives or to live as a true Christian ought to live. "You desire never to be sad?" St. Bernard writes to his sister: "Then live well. If you live well you will never be sad. A secure mind supports sadness with ease and a good mind is always happy. If you persevere in a good life, sadness will flee from you, and, if you persevere in holiness, sadness will not come to you; if you live well and piously, you will fear neither plague nor

[37] Matt. v. 6. [38] Ps. cxix. 5. [39] 2 Cor. vii. 10.

death." [40] "The fear of the Lord shall delight the heart and shall give joy, and gladness and length of days." [41] Now fear of the Lord keeps a man from sinning, and he that lives without sin, lives as becometh a child of God and a member of the mystical body of Christ.

On the other hand there is no greater torment for man than a guilty conscience, for "A wicked heart shall be laden with sorrow." [42] "Conscience," says St. Bernard, "is a continual pain for the sinner. The guilty man is never at peace, and a mind conscious of its guilt is tormented by its own goads." [43] We need no further proof of this than our own experience. When we have passed a day in the service of God, striving to do His holy will in all things and neglecting nothing that might tend to His greater glory and to our spiritual welfare, and to that of our neighbor, have we not felt in the evening, when we lie down to rest, a serene peace and a heavenly joy, because of our daily work well done, whilst when we have been lukewarm in the performance of our daily duties, has conscience not reproached us of our negligence, carelessness and tepidity, because a day was lost to us? Guilt carries with it its own punishment, and "Our glory lies, in this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity of heart and sincerity (that is) of God, and not in carnal wisdom, but in the grace of God, we have conversed in the world." [44]

(c) But of all the remedies that may be proposed, to remain patient in the direst trials and afflictions, prayer is the best. "Is any one of you sad?" says St. James, "let him pray." [45] Why this admonition? Because the inspired Prophet King has in several of his Psalms promised, in the name of God, that prayers in tribulations will be heard. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble," says the Lord, "I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify Me." [46]

Whenever the Jewish people invoked the Lord their God in their afflictions, they were always heard, for, says the Psalmist: "He saw them when they were in tribulations and He heard their prayers." [47] "Prayer," says St. Francis

[40] *Lad. Sor.* [41] Eccli. i. 12. [43] Eccli. iii. 29.
[43] *L. ad. Sor.* No. 29. [44] 2 Cor. i. 12. [45] James v. 13.
[46] Ps. xlix. 15. [47] Ps. cv. 44.

de Sales, "is a sovereign remedy, as it elevates our mind towards God, who is our sole joy and consolation,"[48] but the same holy Doctor also reminds us that in our prayers, whether interior or exterior, we should use affectionate words by which we manifest our love for and confidence in God. Amorous colloquies with our Blessed Lord in the tabernacle, where His exceeding great bounty keeps Him a prisoner for afflicted and needy souls, are greatly to be recommended.

One thing above all that pious souls should bear in mind, is that when anything troubles them, whatever be its source, interior or exterior, they should never leave off their accustomed devotions, no matter how cold and insipid their performance may appear; but rather, if possible, they should increase them and perform them with greater fervor, and they should especially approach the Holy Table daily, if their occupation permit it, for Holy Communion is the celestial food that enlightens the mind, consoles the heart, and strengthens and moves the will not only to suffer with resignation, but to become absolutely indifferent to whatever Providence has in store for us.

(d) Finally it is important that those, whom God tries by affliction, should seek advice from their spiritual director and in order to facilitate the labor he undertakes to aid the sorrowful, they should faithfully disclose to him the sentiments sadness has so far produced in their souls; but meanwhile, says the holy bishop of Geneva, the severely afflicted should frequent the company of wise and pious persons and resign themselves entirely to the will of God.

[48] *Loc. cit.*

ARTICLE IV

Meekness

I. Meekness is a Potential Virtue of Temperance—Its Definition—II. Anger is Opposed to Right Reason: (a) Anger Deprives Man of Reason, Which Makes Him a Rational Creature; (b) He is Not a True Christian, and (c) Much Less a Spiritual Man—III. Meekness Disarms Anger and Hatred, and Procures Peace of Heart—IV. Means by Which We May Become Meek: 1. Foresee the Evil, Such as Injustice and Insult; 2. Meditate on the Meekness of Our Blessed Lord; 3. Remember the Evil You Have Caused to God's Honor, to Your Neighbor—V. Meekness in Correcting.

I. Meekness, we have said, is so connected with patience, that they may be said to be daughters of a common parent, humility, for profound humility engenders both virtues, and neither can exist without it. Again, the presence of evil in our corrupted nature, if we advert to it as such, produces two passions, sadness and anger, and patience is opposed to the former, and meekness to the latter. If an evil that causes displeasure could be removed at will, there would be no occasion for sadness or anger, and when great efforts are required to drive these away, and we fail partly or totally, sadness or anger ensues or sometimes both. "Patience," St. Thomas teaches, "is said [1] to make work perfect, by bearing with adversities: from these proceed first, sadness, which patience moderates and secondly anger, which meekness moderates; thirdly, hatred, which charity takes away and fourthly (revenge or) the infliction of unjust damage, which justice forbids." [2]

We have explained in the beginning of the last article that patience and meekness are potential virtues of temperance and that sadness and anger opposed to them are not in themselves evil; they only become sinful, when they exceed the limits of sound reason; and when great courage and valor are required to preserve patience and meekness, they become potential virtues of fortitude as well.

[1] James i. 4. [2] 2. 2. q. 136 a. 2 to 1.

From the foregoing we conclude that meekness keeps anger within the bounds of right reason or, as some theologians define it, it is a virtue which moderates anger in accordance with sound judgment.

Clemency resembles meekness in that it moderates the indignation and anger of superiors against their inferiors in inflicting exterior punishments.

II. Anger must be moderated by right reason, for otherwise it will crush reason itself, the most noble faculty of man's being. Anger is a passion, if not more common, at least more dangerous than sadness or impatience, although the same evil may cause either or both of them. There is a note of weakness or discouragement in sadness, and through it humility is not entirely lost; but in anger which also arises from an evil we cannot chase away, one confides in his own strength to expel the intruder, and he becomes incensed against whatever may oppose him. From anger to hatred and revenge, there is but a step.

(a) The angered man is temporarily devoid of reason, and his wrath makes him similar to the brute, which cannot reason, and in its fury is only dominated by the fear of a superior power. So also is the angered man: he loses the faculty of judging between good and evil; he is blind to all else but to the evil itself and its consequences; he exaggerates both, and pursues evil with all the efforts he can summon to his aid, but without weighing the best means to free himself from it: he resorts to useless outbursts of displeasure and sometimes has recourse to insults, deprecations and curses, if not to blasphemy against God Himself, and these only aggravate his wrath, for as he lacks counsel, judgment and prudent determination, it is not strange that with a heart thus troubled, excited and perturbed, he can no longer control his exterior. The perturbations which afflict his soul communicate themselves to his body, and the disordered senses react again on the mind, and thus the perturbed soul is like a fish caught on the angler's hook; the more it tries and struggles to free itself, the more securely it is hooked. See here the picture drawn by St. Gregory of the man who labors under the passion of anger: "When the heart is roused to anger, it beats violently, the

body trembles, the tongue is embarrassed, his face is inflamed, his eyes stare and cease to recognize anything. The mouth, forsooth, emits words, but they are only shouts, which cannot be understood. In what does he differ from a demoniac, who knows not what he does?" [3] "What must be, think you," says Seneca, "the soul whose exterior image is so hideous?" [4]

If anger has such frightful consequences, do we not owe it to ourselves to combat the passion energetically, that we may preserve intact the most noble faculty of our being, our reason, on which our excellence and superiority over brute animals is mainly based? See here the generally accepted definition of man: man is an animal endowed with reason. Take away his reason and he is, not more nor less, an animal, a brute.

(b) If a man given up to anger cannot be called a reasonable man, much less can he be regarded as a Christian. To be a real Christian, is it enough to accept the doctrine of Christ and to recognize the sublimity of the truths it teaches? Certainly not; for a Christian must also profess his religion and conform his acts to its teachings. Now Jesus Christ, our Head, has not only taught the beauty and necessity of meekness, but practiced it in all His intercourse with the high and the low, the learned and the ignorant, and even in all His dealings with His enemies. He calls particularly our attention to three virtues as forming the distinct mark of His disciples and followers. The first two are meekness and humility and the other which is the perfection of all virtues, regards our neighbor: love for one another. "Learn of Me that I am meek and humble of heart." "Love you one another as I have loved you. Love your enemies and do good to them that hate you and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you, that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise on the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust." [5] Therefore, since humility is the foundation on which the Christian edifice of holiness and sanctity is built, with the virtues as its solid stones, and whereas love for God and neighbor crowns, unites, cements

[3] Moral., L. 5, c. 30. [4] *L. de Ira,* c. 35. [5] Matt. v. 49 *seq.*

and perfects the whole sacred structure, what value does Jesus not place on meekness, when He names it among the three most cherished virtues He loved and practiced Himself! "Learn of Me," says Our Lord, "that I am meek and humble of heart." He bids us to learn meekness from no one else but from Himself, that, by following the perfect Model, we may also become perfect in meekness.

Now, we know that He who is perfect in one virtue, is perfect in all; but as long as the passion of anger lurks in our breast, there can be no perfection, according to St. James: "Let every man," he says, "be swift to hear but slow to speak and slow to anger, for the anger of man worketh not the justice of God," that is, it maketh not for one's justification and holiness. [6]

The worst consequence of anger is that it leads gradually to mortal sin and even to revenge, and the ruin of our souls, no matter how perfect our lives may have been. Anger is one of the seven capital sins, and our Savior warns us against the vice in the following passage: "Whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother Raca (that is, shall use words of indignation) shall be in danger of the council," (which shall deliberate on the guilt and punishment,) and "whosoever shall say, thou fool (that is, whosoever by a contumelious appellation shall cause his brother to be despised) "shall be in danger of hell fire." The parentheses are ours, added in explanation of the text. There is in this citation undoubtedly a gradation of guilt, which begins with simple anger and finally leads to so gross an insult that it merits an eternal punishment in hell, unless it be forgiven through sincere penitence. We will not follow farther the other evil consequences of anger, such as quarrels, hatred, malicious slander, strifes and lastly murder, for this manual is not written for criminals; but alas! even revenge is not unknown among the Christians of our day.

III. Let us now learn the beauty and advantage of meekness.

The great advantage that meekness has, is that it overcomes not only the passion of wrath, but it also disarms the

[6] James i. 19.

anger of our neighbor. Anger has been fittingly compared to a fire, because it grows and escapes control unless we fight it energetically. St. John Chrysostom after telling us that fire cannot extinguish fire, and that wrath cannot appease another's wrath, continues: "What water is with respect to fire, meekness and clemency are with regard to anger." [7] Is any one angry with you or insults you, or under the impulse of anger, offends you in anything by word or deed, do not retaliate for that would be like throwing oil on a burning fire, but put on a meek and humble demeanor, as if you took all the blame and guilt upon yourself, and you thus have extinguished the fire by water; what is more, unless your aggressor be devoid of noble sentiments, you have won him over from vice to virtue, whilst you practiced the virtues of meekness and forgiveness yourself.

This course of acting with rude and angry people, so well explained by the saint, should be followed with all persons who give us any trouble in our intercourse with them: repay rudeness with courtesy, meanness with kindness, coldness with attention, slight with respect, indifference with devotedness, and so on; but we should always act prudently with troublesome and disagreeable persons we cannot well avoid, and not obtrude upon them favors they may scorn and benevolence they may resent, and above all we should be on our guard that they cannot suspect that we are bent upon their correction, for if this be attempted, the mere suspicion would frustrate the effort.

IV. A common and usual means of acquiring many of the virtues, is to foresee the obstacles to their practice or the possible future events, which might become an occasion of falling into their opposite vices. Thus anything that may offend or displease us, especially from the part of those with whom we have dealings, may be the object of our foresight. If this or that person or any one else would slight me, insult me, call me a hypocrite, unfair in my dealings or even a liar; if any one would behind my back calumniate me, slander me or otherwise injure me in my reputation, honor and good name, what should I do?

[7] Hom. 58 in Gen.

If we are Christian we will imitate our Model Jesus Christ and follow the example which St. Basil proposed to himself: "Have they buffeted or struck you with their fists? Has anyone spit in your face? Our Lord has endured similar insults. Have your enemies calumniated you? Jesus Christ was also calumniated. Possibly they may have torn away our garments, but the executioners took away the Savior's robe and gambled to know who would have it. You are not yet condemned nor nailed to the Cross." [8] What Christian would not be fully determined to suffer insults, calumnies, all kinds of ingratitude, yea, painful blows with lamblike meekness, when he thinks of what Jesus has endured for his eternal welfare and to set him an example, which as a disciple he is bound to follow, if he wishes to share his Master's glory?

St. Gregory who proposes the above means to strengthen us and to prepare us against future dangers of anger and indignation, still proposes another means to acquire the virtue of meekness and it consists in the recollection of the many insults we have offered to the Divine Majesty, by the innumerable sins of our lives, sins the most detestable, because of the blackest ingratitude attached to them; and besides we are reminded that we also have offended our neighbor, and therefore we should willingly condone in others the faults we have committed ourselves; for "The falls," he says, 'with which we reproach ourselves, calms the wrath that rises in our souls, as water extinguishes fire; for he who remembers that he has need of indulgence, which God and his fellowman have used towards him, would shame not to pardon in return." [9] Finally we should practice the virtue of meekness, by resisting the first inclination to disgust, indignation or anger. This is the advice of St. Francis de Sales. We should then suppress the first motions of anger, as soon as we are conscious of their presence in our heart, but seriously and not impatiently. There are many occasions for the practice of meekness in our daily lives, even when we are alone. If something goes wrong, look coolly at the situation and do not blame yourself when you are not at fault. Do not unreasonably chastise in anger an animal

[8] Hom. 10, *de Ira.* [9] Moral., L. 5, c. 30.

on account of some damage done by it, and much less fly into a rage, because of some unexpected accident. Accustom yourself to acts of kindness and meekness towards every one, not excepting those that dislike or hate you. Practice meekness with yourself. Do not chastise yourself in anger for a fault, even if it was wholly deliberate, as by doing so, you manifest that pride and not regret for your sin moves you to punish yourself; for often pride which is wounded by the commission of a sin, causes disgust and revengeful spite against ourselves, because we are less virtuous than we esteemed ourselves. Enter upon your charges and undertake your most serious occupations with care and diligence, but without haste or anxiety; let nothing trouble you and leave the result of your labor to God, who has placed you in the position you occupy. Avoid even beginning any work or duty with too much ardor, for haste, anxiety and solicitude resulting from it, trouble the mind and prevent good judgment.

Through the neglect of this simple method, you may by precipitation lose control of yourself, and by meekness alone can you recover the mastery; for "Meekness," says St. Thomas, "makes man master of himself." [10] Remember the slight rebuke kindly administered by the Savior to Martha, who complained that her sister Mary allowed her to do all the house work alone: "Martha, Martha," said Our Lord, "thou art careful and art troubled about many things." [11] This lesson teaches us to perform our duties quietly, without haste or precipitation, and that we should remain perfectly resigned, as to the results, to the will of God, who regulates the outcome of our efforts for the best interest of His glory and of our spiritual welfare.

The question may here be asked, whether one may expose himself to insults, ridicule, contempt, and the recriminations of his neighbor, with the object of exercising one's patience and meekness. This is allowed provided one is entirely confident that he will not yield to the temptation, and that it can be done without becoming an accessory to his neighbor's sin, which ordinarily speaking, cannot be done. If you know of a man who will insult or revile you, you

[10] 2. 2. q. 157 a. 4 to 1. [11] Luke x. 40.

should not purposely meet him, for thus you would share in his guilt; but you should not omit your duties, your devotions and usual acts of charity, because your enemy will attribute your conduct to hypocrisy, vainglory or gain, and will try to blacken your character and your good name. We are recommended nevertheless, that among our friends and acquaintances we should preferably seek the company of the most rude, uncouth and unsympathetic; for charity demands that through kindness and courtesy we should alleviate as much as we can the burden of their unenviable and unhappy disposition, for they are usually shunned by everyone; and probably, our own urbanity, devotion and affection will go far to change their disagreeable temperament.

We should also avoid going about in rags or unkempt with the intention of attracting the ridicule and contempt of our fellowman, especially so, if our conduct would bring ridicule upon our holy religion.

V. Not all anger is sinful, for Holy Scripture says: "Be angry and sin not." St. Paul in this citation quotes the Prophet King,[12] and he adds: "Let not the sun go down upon your anger. Give no place to the devil."[13] Thus David and the Apostle of the Gentiles both teach that there is an anger just and licit. Sin is hateful and wherever we find it in ourselves or in others, we should pursue, persecute and exterminate it to the extent of our power; but let us be careful to keep from sinning by persecuting the sinner, for: "Revenge is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."[14] Revenge or correction, by inflicting punishment, also belongs to legitimate superiors, who occupy God's place upon earth, such as fathers and mothers, civil and ecclesiastical authorities, whose duty it is to repress evil and wickedness. Still they must follow the injunction of the Apostle: "Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good,"[15] that is, do not sin yourselves by punishing the sins of others. The first motion of anger, not being wilful or deliberate, is not sinful; but the passion must be resisted and be kept within the bounds of justice and moderation. "Anger," says St. Thomas, "is the desire of vengeance, for it supposes a proportion between the punishment to be inflicted and the harm

[12] Ps. iv. 5. [13] Ephes. iv. 26, 27. [14] Rom. xii. 19. [15] *Loc. cit.*, 21.

that has been done." [16] Besides, love of their inferiors and not hatred should induce superiors to chastise by words or by other spiritual or corporal punishments. Correction when done in improper anger, especially when anger is shown in one's countenance or gestures, will fail of the good result we should have in view, when correction has been found necessary; for, as St. Francis de Sales remarks, if the passion of anger appear exteriorly, it offends and becomes odious. A reasonable man gives way to reason; but even reason associated with wrath, only causes indignation in the breast of him for whom the correction was intended, and seldom leads to the amendment of the evil-doer.

Although just and equitable anger or indignation is lawful, it is seldom advisable, according to the saintly bishop of Geneva, who, being of an irascible temper, became a model of meekness by his constant efforts to subdue the passion. It is much more preferable, he maintains, to refuse admission into our hearts even to rightful anger; for, when it has once entered, it is not easily expelled. [17] Allow it one night to lodge with you and before morning, it is turned into wrath and hatred, a step easily reached, because the remembrance of all that surrounds the cause or origin of the first motions of your anger, aggravates the evil, as there is no one who will admit that there is any injustice in his anger. The first motions of the passion, although justifiable in the beginning, promptly grow into wrath and indignation, if not into revenge; and thus they soon gain the upperhand with the result that one is forcibly convinced that great efforts will be required to eject the intruder. This explains the warning sounded by the masters of spiritual life, which all legitimate authorities should bear in mind, to wit: that superiors should never punish in anger or indignation, unless even a short delay would seriously interfere with the just retribution the guilty one deserves. They should wait long enough until they are perfectly calm, and they are able to listen to the voice of reason: for, as Aristotle well remarks: "He is meek, who is irritated only for good motives, and against the one he should be, and in the manner he should be, when he should and as long as

[16] 1. 2. q. 46 a. 4. [17] *Cfr.* St. Augustine to Profiturus.

he should be; for the meek man is free from trouble and passion only in so far as reason guides him." [18] Must we now conclude that superiors should be unconcerned when their orders are neglected or disobeyed, or inferiors make light of the laws and regulations which should govern their conduct? Far from it; for those placed in authority become responsible before God, if, through their negligence those subject to them fail in the observance of their duties. The Philosopher just quoted, teaches us also, that: "Those who are never angry, even when they should be, seem deprived of reason, as they appear to lack sentiment and feeling." [19] "Those that practice meekness," says St. Basil, "are not forbidden to be betimes agitated; hence, we can easily understand that Moses, whom Holy Scripture asserts was the meekest of mortals, was violently indignant when reason seemed to demand it." [20]

In the Old Testament anger is frequently attributed to God, when He punished the Jewish people, who had rebelled against the chosen leaders of His people or committed some other grievous offense. In God there can be no change of sentiments, as He is eternally the same; but Holy Writ often calls it anger when He exercises justice on the guilty; and in like manner, superiors only do their duty, when without losing peace and tranquillity of mind and heart, they duly correct the evil they see and chastise those subject to them, with due regard to equity, to the honor and glory of God, and to the spiritual and temporal welfare of those, for whose conduct they are accountable.

Magnanimity—Longsuffering—Perseverance

There are several virtues which partake of the nature of humility, patience and meekness, which we deem necessary to explain briefly.

1. "Magnanimity," says St. Thomas, "is a virtue that tends to great things in conformity with sound reason." [21] It is therefore opposed to ambition and presumption, vices to which the magnanimous man would be naturally disposed but for the virtue, which inclines him to despise

[18] 4 *Ethics*, c. 3.
[19] Loc. *cit.*
[20] *Constit. Monast.*, c. 15.
[21] 2. 2. q. 129 a. 3.

honors, praises and glory, and to place his trust in God. Magnanimity thus springs from a passion for great deeds, that has been diverted into its proper channel and kept within the bounds of reason, whilst the virtue which replaces the passion through supernatural motives, is strengthened and invigorated, and thus it makes a Christian capable of great deeds for the honor of God and the welfare of his neighbor. Although magnanimous deeds are in themselves honorable, the magnanimous Christian rather despises honors and fame as unworthy of a disciple of the humble Nazarene. Our Redeemer practiced the virtue of magnanimity in the highest degree, in His sublime work of saving man from eternal ruin by His heroic sacrifice of the Cross, and He sought not His own glory but the glory of the Father who sent Him. After Him the Apostles, the early martyrs and numberless saints and other faithful followers of Christ were truly magnanimous, when they devoted their lives to the spiritual or temporal welfare of their neighbor, and when they gloried only in being disciples of their meek and humble crucified Master.

The magnanimous Christian despises all worldly goods; he rejoices not when they come to him nor is he saddened because of their loss, and he abhors contentions and strifes, for exterior things are of little value in his eyes. He does not seek dangers, because he presumes not on his own strength, nor does he fear them, and he is ready at all times to confront the greatest perils when the honor of his God and the welfare of his fellow-mortals are concerned. Magnanimity, finally, readily forgives insults and wrong-doings, because that involves great sacrifice, and the magnanimous despise the contempt of others as a mere nugacity unworthy of their notice.

2. Longanimity or longsuffering regards the distant future, according to St. Thomas, and partakes of the nature of patience, but much more of magnanimity. Patience suffers some evil, but because evil is of short duration, it is easily endured. If on the contrary the evil is supposed to be persistent and of long duration, magnanimity comes to the aid of patience and in this the virtue of longsuffering consists. The same may be said of some longed-for good

which delays in coming to us; now, if one undergoes serious labor to acquire what he hopes for, then constancy as well as longanimity are required.[22] The virtue of longsuffering regards more the hope of the good that can be attained than the fear of the evil to be removed; for it is the expectation of ultimate success that principally induces man to endure, and this applies particularly to magnanimity, as we explained above. Man may patiently endure to escape a greater evil, but even then the freedom from a great evil is a very acceptable benefit.

3. Perseverance or constancy is a potential virtue of fortitude and is necessarily a constituent part of every virtue; but it is a special virtue, if we consider it as a constant and permanent habit of doing good in spite of the opposition of sadness or of the presence of an evil that may thwart our efforts in any good work.

Final perseverance is a special gift of God, which we cannot acquire like the virtue or habit of perseverance, for as long as we live we will remain free agents for good or evil, and we may abuse that freedom. Of ourselves we can do nothing and without the aid of God we would surely fall into the most deplorable faults. If we may now confidently assume that we are in the state of sanctifying grace, we have not the assurance that God will continue to bestow on us efficacious graces to persevere to the end. Prayer alone can obtain for us that most precious gift of final perseverance, and we are often reminded by the saints and the masters of spiritual life, that a childlike confidence in the protection of the Blessed Virgin together with an entire detachment from all material and transitory things, are the surest means to obtain the greatest gift that God can bestow on us.

[22] 1. 2. q. 70 a. 3 q. 136 a. 5.

ARTICLE V

The Virtue of Religion

Summary: I. Its Definition and Motives—Excellence of the Virtue—II. Act of Religion; Their Merits Are Due to the Interior Sentiments of the Soul—III. Exterior Worship also Demanded; Proofs—Different Classes of Worship—IV. Special Acts of Worship—The Sacrifice Due to God Alone—Virtuous Acts Improperly Called Sacrifices—V. Other Exterior Acts of Religion: Oaths and Vows.

Religion renders homage to God for the motive that He is the Creator and preserver of all things;[1] but as God is infinitely perfect, He deserves an homage and worship of infinite worth which man cannot bestow. God alone can render to Himself all the honor, praise, respect and reverence due Him, but man gives what he can when he renders to his Maker a sovereign and supreme worship, recognizing thereby as far as he is able, the supreme excellence and dignity of Him who is self-existent, absolute and necessary and on whom all things depend for their existence. All the favors we receive from God and which He alone can bestow, may be motives to render to Him the supreme homage of our hearts, and thus all acts of reverence, respect, adoration, obedience and gratitude undertaken and performed with a view of recognizing His supreme dominion, sovereign majesty and excellence, are acts of the virtue of religion.

The virtue of religion occupies the first place among the moral virtues; for as St. Thomas teaches: "Religion approaches nearer to God than the other moral virtues, in that it practices what is ordained directly and immediately to honor Him; therefore it excels the other moral virtues."[2] Thus obedience, patience, chastity, meekness, etc., are moral virtues and their practice directly tends to make us obedient, patient, chaste and meek, although the ultimate end of all

[1] St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 81 a. 3-4. [2] 2. 2. q. 81 a. 6.

virtues is God who commands or counsels them; but the proximate and direct end of all religious observances is the worship of God, and thus all pious acts of religion necessarily and by their very nature honor and reverence the Creator of all things.

Nevertheless, the virtue of religion is inferior to the virtues of faith, hope and charity, properly called divine or theological virtues, in this that God is their immediate object as well as their motive; for by faith we believe in God, because He is all-truthful; by hope we trust in Him, because He is all-faithful in His promises, and by charity we love Him, because He is infinitely amiable or all-good; whilst the immediate object of religion is an interior or exterior worship or a practice which honors and glorifies our Father in heaven.

The Angelic Doctor gives us a second reason to make us understand the excellence of religion: "Through sanctity," he says, "the mind of man consecrates itself and its acts to God. Therefore, it is not essentially different from religion," [3] by which we offer to God the service which is due Him through divine worship, such as sacrifices, oblations and others of that nature. [4] From which we conclude that sanctity and religion differ only in that the former extends to all the moral acts of man, whilst the latter regards solely the interior and exterior worship of God. Finally, religion like charity will endure forever, even in heaven, for the life of angels and of the blessed in heaven is but one and continuous act of love, adoration and thanksgiving. Faith will vanish with the dawn of reality, when the sight of God face to face will reveal us all truth; hope will end with the possession of the Sovereign Good; but charity, like a fire kindled upon earth and intensified in heaven, is participation in God's nature and will burn forever without diminution.

II. Whatever merit or beauty there is in our exterior acts of worship, it is due to the interior sentiments of the soul and these are either natural or supernatural, according as they are produced by the natural powers of the soul only, or are accomplished with the aid of God's grace. As we

[3] *Ibid.*, a. 7. [4] *Ibid.*

have more than once stated before, for every supernatural act a prevenient grace from God must precede the efforts of the soul in elevating itself to the supernatural, and the help of God is continually required to sustain and aid the soul in performing and completing the work begun under the impulse of grace. As the divine aid is never denied to those who are in the state of grace, the luster and excellence of the virtue of religion spring from the intimate conviction of the soul, which, on the one hand, is aware of its nothingness, and on the other, recognizes the infinite perfection of God, its Creator and Preserver, and thus it subjects itself with the deepest humility to the Sovereign Majesty.

In the Old Law God established through Moses sacrifices of birds, calves, oxen and goats, and the Psalmist upbraids the Jews in the following words: "Shall I eat the flesh of bullocks? or shall I drink the blood of goats? Offer to God the sacrifice of prayer and pay thy vows to the most High." [5] And why this sharp rebuke? Simply because exterior worship without the soul's interior sentiments of adoration and praise is not acceptable to the Lord of heaven and earth. He has no need of our offerings, for He is infinitely rich: but His bounty towards His needy creatures prompts Him to accept our humble homage to reward it a hundred fold. "We render to God honor and glory," says St. Thomas, "not for His sake, for He enjoys the fullness of glory to which no creature can add anything; but for our sake, because by honoring and glorifying Him, our soul subjects itself to Him and in this consists its perfection." [6] St. Augustine [7] reminds us of the same truth: "If man fitly honors the Lord," he says, "it is to his advantage and not to that of God; for no one can say that it is useful to a source when its water is drunk or to light when its brightness is seen." [8]

III. From the above we should not conclude that exterior worship is a vain observance and entirely useless; for man is so constituted that when the body shares in the acts of the soul, and conforms itself exteriorly to the senti-

[5] Ps. xlix. 13.
[6] 2. 2. q. 81 a. 7.
[7] Died 430.
[8] *De Civ. Dei*, L. 10, c. 5.

ments of its mistress, pious and ardent emotions are engendered which affect our whole being: fervor is enkindled in the soul and man becomes more spiritual because he has become less material and sensual. Not only does exterior worship intensify the religious sentiments of the soul, but it is a powerful aid to preserve proper recollection, and to drive away the troublesome distractions one often experiences in silent prayer and serious meditation; for the splendor of our Catholic ceremonial keeps our attention, as it were, riveted to the consciousness of the majesty of God, who is honored by the pomp which is displayed before our eyes, and by the sacred music which thrills our whole being.

Besides it is proper that man should subject his whole being to his Creator and, therefore, the body should partake with the soul in the divine worship. Man is also a social being and therefore society at large must be brought to the feet of the Author of all good, and this cannot be accomplished without a visible and public worship, which, when shared by many, draws blessings on the whole nation.

Peoples of different nationalities have different interests and therefore, numerous commonwealths have been established to safeguard by wise laws the material interests of their respective citizens, but although the temporal aims of peoples, in the length and breadth of this world, differ greatly, they have a common origin and their destiny after this life is the same, and hence, it is proper that there should be a visible union, a bond of relationship between the children of the same heavenly Father, and of the same promise and inheritance, and this can only be effected by one and the same public sacrifice and by one and the same priesthood. The public worship among the Jewish people united them by an indissoluble bond, from the time of Moses to the coming of the Messiah, although the supreme authority was vested at first in judges, and thereafter in the hands of a monarchial government, and finally a republican form of government was adopted. Wisely, indeed, did the Redeemer provide a union among all Christian people of widely different nationalities, by establishing one and the same sacrifice and public worship, and one and the same priesthood. Their permanency is a guarantee of the faith, and

without it disintegration would be the result. As an example among Christians we can point to the numerous sects that sprang up among Protestants after they had abandoned the public worship of the Catholic Church. This view is still further corroborated by the example of the Greek Orthodox and the Armenian Churches. Although separated from the Catholic Church since the middle of the eleventh century, they have maintained the true faith nearly intact, because although subject to various political governments, they have remained faithful to the public worship left them as a legacy by the Apostles.

As to the different classes of worship, we refer the reader to Article XII, on the devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

III. The principal acts of the virtue of religion are: adoration, prayer and sacrifice, which are obligatory upon all those who have attained the use of reason, and oaths, adjurations and vows, which are left to each one's free choice, but they may in some particular cases be imposed as a duty by the proper authorities.

Adoration taken in a strict sense is an interior act of worship, by which we testify God's excellence and our entire subjection to Him. The excellence of God surpasses infinitely our comprehension and the more we meditate on it the greater wonders our feeble mind detects in His boundless perfection. God alone is self-existent. He is the only necessary Being and is necessarily all that He is. "I am who am" is the name He gave Himself.[9] He is absolute and independent, and all things whatsoever, that are not God, being created by Him, depend on Him for their existence and preservation. "God is" and He possesses the plenitude of being, and all that is good or desirable may be predicated of Him, not in a limited but in an infinite degree: He is all-wise, omnipotent, all-holy, all-just, immense, infinitely lovable and amiable, eternal and eternally the self-same God, as nothing can be added to His infinitely perfect nature, nor can time add years to His age.

God is great in all His works and admirable in His bounty towards His creatures, but unless these truths help

[9] Ex. iii. 14.

man to elevate himself above all God has made, it will profit him nothing. We must esteem God for His own sake, for as long as anything that is not God holds us back, we cannot fly to Him, the Source of all good. "Who will give me wings like a dove," says the Psalmist, "and I will fly and be at rest." [10] God is everything and all else is as nothing. The order and beauty of the universe is less than a drop of water in the immense ocean of perfection which is God. "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" [11] Today man is and tomorrow he is no more. By himself he is helpless, like the worm of this earth we crush under our feet. Divine Providence preserves us like every other creature: if we were left one moment to ourselves without the sustaining hand of God, we would instantly return to nothingness. These and other truths deduced from them compel a thinking man to exclaim with St. Francis of Assisi: "What art Thou, O Lord, and what am I?"

If God is all and we are nothing, it behooves us to add to our interior recognition of His infinite perfections and of our dependence on Him for all that we have or are, exterior acts corresponding to the interior sentiments of the soul, such as genuflections, the profound and reverent bowing of the head, prostrations, etc. They are not required by the all-knowing God as evidences of our interior sentiments, but the body should also share in the soul's subjection to the Divine Majesty, and moreover, the exterior signs of our inward emotions intensify the sentiments of the soul which produce them, as we have all experienced many times and verified in others.

Pious souls are not satisfied with the interior and exterior homage they render to the Divine Majesty: they worship in God every perfection known to them through revelation and through the teachings of the Church, and resort to divine praises, to express their admiration and tender affection for a God so great, so good, so holy and so merciful, and thus they imitate King David who blessed the Lord because He is exceedingly great and sang His praises. [12] "I will sing to the Lord as long as I live," says again the

[10] Ps. liv. 7. *Cfr. Imitation,* Book 3, v. 31, 1. 2.
[11] Ps. viii. 5. [12] Ps. ciii. 104.

Prophet King, "I will sing praise to my God while I have my being."[13] When David had ordered the ark of God to be placed in the tent prepared for it, he commanded Asaph the chief Levite to praise the Lord with his brethren and to give glory to Him, for He is good and to sing to the Lord forever, for the Lord is great and exceedingly to be praised, "and His mercy endureth forever."[14] The same holy king, not satisfied with the praises he himself offered to the Supreme Majesty, invited in several of his Psalms the whole universe and the angels of heaven to praise and bless the Lord of heaven and earth,[15] and the three young men in the fiery furnace also called upon all the creatures of God to bless the Lord.[16]

We, God's rational creatures upon earth, owe it to Him to glorify and exalt His holy name for all the favors He has bestowed upon us through our creation, preservation and redemption, and if we add to these the particular gifts, which each one of us has received, in the order of nature and in the order of grace, it would be the blackest ingratitude not to humble ourselves before a Father so munificent and not to exalt and glorify Him with all the enthusiasm our soul is capable of.

We also worship God by prayer; for as prayer is an elevation of our mind to the Giver of all good, and as by it we supplicate Him to grant us whatever we need for the body or the soul, we honor Him by testifying that all good comes to us through His munificence. By humble and sincere prayer we also rely upon God's omnipotence and on His fidelity to His promises, and thus we glorify Him as the bountiful Creator of heaven and earth and the Source of all good. Thus, a humble and pious prayer recognizes the power, the wisdom, mercy and liberality of our heavenly Father, and our soul willingly and gladly submits to Him its intellect and will and all the endowments of its being, and leaves to His benignity and wise providence to grant its requests in the manner most suitable to its present and eternal welfare, while in sentiments if not in words, the soul repeats "Not as I will but as Thou wilt."

IV. Sacrifice is the principal act of the virtue of

[13] Ps. ciii. 36. [14] 1 Par. xvi. 34. [15] Ps. cxlviii. [16] Dan. iii. 52 *seq.*

religion. By sacrifice we understand an offering made to God by destroying it in His honor, or by making it useless for the purpose for which it is naturally adapted to thus recognize His dominion over all things. This definition shows clearly that sacrifice is the most essential act of the supreme worship and that it can be offered to God alone.

All the peoples that have ever existed, either by natural instinct or by the command of the Deity, have testified their submission to and their dependence on the Supreme Being by sacrifices; and as He is the Author of the natural instinct, the prevailing custom, among past and present nations of this earth, can only be explained by attributing its origin to God Himself.

Since the children of Adam, Cain and Abel, offered up sacrifices, it is evident that God Himself was the Author. Both Cain and Abel offered the best they had, the former the fruits of the earth and the latter the firstlings of his flock. Noah offered sacrifice to God upon his leaving the ark after the deluge. In the time of Abraham, after the victory he gained over four kings, Melchisedech, King of Salem, who was a priest of the most High, offered bread and wine and he blessed Abraham;[17] and St. Paul teaches us that the sacrifice of Melchisedech was a figure of the sacrifice which the Redeemer instituted, to wit, the sacrifice of the New Law.[18]

In confirmation of the alliance contracted between God and Abraham, the latter was commanded to immolate a victim.[19] Abraham and Jacob are often said in Holy Scripture to have constructed an altar and all commentators agree that the purpose was none other than to offer up a sacrifice of thanksgiving. Job offered up every day a holocaust for the sins of his children.[20] On the spot on which God had deigned to speak to Jacob, the latter consecrated a stone by pouring oil over it, evidently with the intention of using the stone as an altar for sacrifices;[21] for he called the stone Bethel, that is, the house of God, and vowed to offer on it tithes to the Lord.[22]

When Moses was commanded by God to slay the Paschal

[17] Gen. xiv. 18. [18] Heb. vii. 8. [19] Gen. xv. 9.
[20] Job i. 5. [21] Gen. xxxi. 13; xxviii. 18. [22] *Ibid.*, 28, 22.

Lamb,[23] and when later he prescribed by God's order the ceremonial of religious worship in all its details, set forth in Leviticus, the Jewish people were not entire strangers to the means, which God himself had formerly chosen, to be fitly adored and receive divine honors.

Nevertheless all the sacrifices of the Mosaic dispensation, had their efficacy, not in themselves, but their worth and excellence came from the sacrifice of the New Law, to wit, the sacrifice of the Cross of which they were the figures and types; for "It is impossible that the blood of oxen and of goats sins should be taken away,"[24] and that the friendship of God could be restored to the soul by the infusion of sanctifying grace. This is done through a New Covenant made by God with His people through Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the New Testament, who by His sacred blood spilled on the cross, merited for us not only the remission of sin, but all graces necessary to the salvation and perfection of our souls.[25]

The patriarch and after them the Israelites offered to God in sacrifice the best of their flocks and of their fruits of the earth; but in the New Law, no purely exterior worship is any longer acceptable to God; for Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to teach us to "Adore God in spirit and in truth." Should we conclude from this that the Redeemer left the Church, the new Christian society which supplanted the Jewish Church, without sacrifice, the most essential act of divine worship? Shall there be in the new dispensation no "High priest taken from among men....that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins?"[26] Our Catholic doctrine teaches us that Christ our Savior immolated Himself by His death on the cross for the redemption of mankind; but the priesthood did not cease with His death; for the night before He died, having changed the bread and wine into His body and blood, He commanded His Apostles to do likewise, and thus they also and their successors became "Priests forever according to the order of Melchisedech."[27]

The Church has always held that in the Mass, the sacri-

[23] Ex. xii. [24] Heb. x. 4. [25] *Ibid.*, 9, 10.
[26] Heb. v. 1. [27] Ps. cix. 4.

fice of the New Law, the same Savior who died for us on the cross offers Himself to His eternal Father, as a victim to expiate our sins and to obtain for us all blessings, and that the Mass is the same sacrifice as that of the cross, offered up in an unbloody manner through the ministry of the priests.[28] The sacrifice now agreeable to God is not that of oxen, sheep and goats, "For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, My name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice and there is offered to My name a clean oblation: for My name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts."[29] The prophet had just foretold in the preceding verse that the Lord would no longer accept any sacrifice nor gift from the hands of the Jewish priest: the old sacrifices offered in Jerusalem only were to be abolished and a new sacrifice, a clean oblation, was to take their place, and it was to be offered not only in Jerusalem, but in every place in the wide world. It is evident that the prophecy of Malachy was fulfilled when our Savior instituted, the night before He died, the Holy Eucharist, the cleanest, the purest and holiest offering, in which He Himself is the Priest and Victim, and in which all the ends of the Mosaic sacrifices are counted in one oblation, eminently acceptable to God the Father. The ends for which the sacrifice of the Cross, as well as that of the Mass, which is essentially the same, are offered, are four: to worship God and to give to Him all the glory due to His divine majesty, to thank Him for all the favors bestowed on the human race, to satisfy God's justice for the sins of men and to obtain new graces and favors.[30] When we consider the ineffable and truly infinite dignity of the sacrifice of the Mass, words fail to express our admiration and stupefaction, and being unable to understand the condescension of God towards His sinful children on earth in the Savior's oblation of Himself for their sake, we exclaim with the Apostle St. Thomas: "My Lord and my God,"[31] or with Simon Peter: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."[32] The former was amazed at the sight of the risen Savior and the latter was overcome with

[28] Co. of Trent, Sess. 22, c. 1. [29] Mal. i. 11.
[30] *Cat. Trid.* [31] John xx. 28. [32] Luke v. 8.

stupefaction at the miraculous draught of fishes; but what must have been the wonderment and amazement not of men but of angels, when the Son of God, equal to His Father from all eternity, died on the cross, a victim for criminals, and willed that the same sacrifice should be renewed every day on our altars, so that we who sin daily might find therein a cure for our spiritual ailments and for our daily transgressions.

Two observations are here proper and in order: one regards the priests who offer up the sacrifice, and the other regards the faithful who assist at its celebration.

With regard to the priests, their dignity surpasses that of the Cherubim and Seraphim, as they are invested with a miraculous power more marvelous than the creation of the world; for in the august sacrifice the Creator Himself obeys them. Moreover, "The priest clad in his sacred vestments is Christ's vicegerent and when he celebrates, he honors God, he rejoices the angels, he edifies the Church, he helps the living, he obtains rest for the dead and makes himself the partaker of all that is good." [33] Therefore, as at the altar they occupy Christ's place or are other Christs, priests should, as St. Paul expresses it, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ," [34] that is, they should be clothed as it were with Christ's virtues, with His purity of life and His sanctity, so that before the eyes of the people they may fitly represent and impersonate the Redeemer, who has invested them with His own person and dignity. "What sanctity also shall we not demand of the priest," says St. John Chrysostom, "what piety! For consider what must be the hands that touch things so sacred! What must be the tongue that pronounces those words (of consecration)! How much it behooves that the soul, which has received a power so potent and divine, be pure and holy!" [35]

As to the faithful who assist at the holy sacrifice, let them bear in mind that their dispositions should be the same, as if they assisted at the last hours of the dying Savior on the cross, for the Priest and Victim of the oblations in the Mass and on the cross are the same and the ends for which they are offered, are also the same. Both sacrifices are of

[33] *Imitation,* Bk. 4, ch. 5. [34] Rom. xiii. 14. [35] *De Sacerdotio,* L. 6.

equal dignity and worth, and equally salutary for the living and the dead. The only difference is that on our altars an unbloody sacrifice is offered, for Christ can die no more; but a separate consecration of the bread and wine represents the death of Our Lord on the cross, and is a living and vivid memorial of it.

With what sentiments of humility and piety, veneration and gratitude, should we then assist at the tremendous sacrifice of the Mass! Our outward demeanor should likewise correspond to the interior sentiments of the soul; for as St. John Chrysostom remarks: "If one is in the presence of a king of this earth, he uses all his efforts to testify the greatest respect possible, that thereby he may conciliate his kindness, not only by the aspect of his countenance, but also by the tone of his voice, the position of his hands, the pose of his feet, and by the attitude of his whole person. It is thus that we must behave in the presence of God, by rendering Him a similar honor, contemplating Him with the eyes of faith, as really present before us, whilst fearing and trembling before Him." [36]

IV. In the strict sense of the word, a sacrifice as we have seen, is an offering of an object made to God, to recognize His dominion over all created things, and furthermore it implies the destruction of it, or at least a change must occur in the object; but in a wide sense the word, sacrifice means anything offered to God, as when David says: "Offer to God the sacrifice of praise." [37] Thus also the parting with a share of our goods for the relief of the indigent, is called a sacrifice; but unless the act has for end the good pleasure of God, it could hardly participate of the nature of a sacrifice. We may sacrifice our ease and comfort, mortify our senses, surrender our self-will, give up our lives to God and perform other acts of renunciation and call them sacrifices; but they are not sacrifices properly called, because they are not the recognized acts of religion and of the worship of God. If they are referred to God, they are acts of service, undertaken to please Him, and thus they belong to the virtue of devotion, of which there is question in the next article.

[36] In *Isai.* Hom. 1. [37] Ps. xlix. 14.

There are many other acts of religion besides adoration and sacrifice, such as genuflections, prostrations, the striking of one's breast, the extending of one's arms in the form of a cross, the taking part in processions and pilgrimages, and in one word all that may tend to the honor and glory of God; but in all such public observances, also often called devotions, the faithful should avoid singularity, as apt to attract attention and to bring ridicule upon themselves, and therefore they will do well to conform their devotions to the practice of the Church.

V. Vows and oaths are also acts of religion and as they may be abused and debased, and thus become occasions of sin, a short explanation of each is necessary.

A vow is a promise made to God of something agreeable to Him, and, as such, it is an act of religion, for we read in Isaias: "They shall know the Lord in that day, and shall worship Him with sacrifices and offerings; and they shall make vows to the Lord and perform them." [88] A vow, by the fact itself that it creates an obligation to fulfil it, must be distinguished from a resolution or determination to perform an act acceptable to our Maker. The latter entails no new obligation, while he that makes a licit vow contracts the self-imposed duty to comply with his promise in the manner he proposed to himself in making it; and should he fail to do so in a matter of importance, he commits a mortal sin, a serious offence against the Divine Majesty, unless he intended to obligate himself only under pain of venial sin. Therefore, no one should make a vow lightly and without due consideration; for those who easily make vows in any danger or in their eagerness to obtain some temporal favor, are precisely those who as easily break their promise.

In practice no one should make, in matters of great importance, a vow without previously consulting his confessor or director. Thus young people should not without his previous approbation make the vow of chastity or celibacy; they should not vow to perform acts of piety too difficult and onerous, such as pilgrimages to a far away shrine, especially so if the fulfilment of their vows depends on the

[88] Is. xix. 21.

will of their father or mother or other superiors; but the vow would be a valid one if it was made conditionally, *e. g.,* if parents consent. In that case the permission must be asked, and, if granted, the vow must be kept. Let us not conclude from these remarks, that it is not salutary to make vows to conciliate God's friendship and that of His saints in all our necessities; for vows tend to greater fervor and greater confidence in the help from above; but prudence and deliberation are required to avoid the want of respect due to the Divine Majesty, by not complying with the obligation of a vow.

An oath is a calling upon God to witness the truth of an assertion or the sincerity of a promise. The principle which justifies an oath, lies in the belief of man that God is infallible and knows all things, and therefore man calls upon Him as a witness. Its end also is good, to wit: to inflict justice on the wicked and to free the innocent from false accusation and unjust condemnation. It also settles controversies. [39]

God Himself approves of swearing as an act of religion: "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God....and thou shalt swear by His name." [40] When our Savior warns His hearers: "I say to you do not swear at all," [41] He does not condemn the use of swearing, but the abuse of it and the habit of swearing; for frequent oaths tend to the habit of swearing and the habit leads to perjury. [42] The licitness of an oath is also proven by the practice of the Church, which not only tolerates it, but demands it of the witnesses in ecclesiastical trials.

The heretic, John Wicklif, taught that oaths are illicit, if they are taken to strengthen human contracts and civic dealings, but this proposition, in its general sense, was condemned in the Council of Constance.

There must be a sufficient cause to take an oath. The honor of God, the spiritual or temporal welfare of our neighbor, and the command of our legitimate authorities are sufficient causes to make an oath illicit. Besides, to make an oath lawful, he that swears must be morally certain that

[39] *Cfr.* St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 89 a. 2. [40] Deut. vi. 13.
[41] Matt. v. 34. [42] St. Thomas, *loc. cit.*

he swears to the truth; for he would otherwise expose himself to commit perjury, and if there be question of a promissory oath, the keeping of the promise sworn to should in all respects conform to justice. All these conditions are contained in the warning of the prophet Jeremiah: "Thou shalt not swear as the Lord liveth in truth, in judgment and in justice." [43] An indiscreet oath lacks judgment, a mendacious oath lacks truthfulness, and a sinful or illicit oath lacks justice. [44]

[43] Jerem. iv. 2.

[44] St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 89 a. 3.

ARTICLE VI

Devotion

I. In What Devotion Consists—It is not a Special Virtue; But it Perfects Every Moral Virtue—Devotion Cannot Exist Without Charity—II. Sensible Affections are not Essential to Devotion; Observations: 1. Essential Devotion in Demanded of all—2. We Must Strive to Excite in us Essential Devotion and Make it an Object of Our Most Sincere Prayer—3. Sensible Consolations Are Not to be Despised—Reasons Therefore—4. How Sensible Devotions Should be Received and the Use we Should Make of Them—Sensible Devotion Which Makes Us No Better, is False—Why God Withdraws Consolations—May We Ask For Sensible Devotion?—III. Obstacles to Devotion: (a) Exterior Consolation; (b) Venial Sins; (c) Occupations that Distract the Soul and Prevent Recollection; Rules; (d) Too Great Solicitude on Divers Occasions is Opposed to Devotion.

The word devotion comes from the Latin *"devovere,"* (to consecrate); hence the meaning of consecrating ourselves or anything else to God. Therefore, they who in any manner consecrate themselves and dedicate themselves to God, are said to be devout.[1] Most people of the world cannot form a true concept or understand the meaning of that sweet inclination which is found in true devotion, says St. Francis de Sales, and therefore they deride and ridicule it. "True and solid devotion," he says, "consist in a constant, determined, prompt and lively will to execute what one knows to be agreeable to God, or if we consider it as a virtue, it is an inclination to promptly and joyfully undertake whatever belongs to God's service."[2] Thus devotion is an entire devotedness to God in all that He desires of us.

Among Catholics the word devotion means also acts of devotion, prompted by the virtue of devotion and especially those which are not strictly obligatory. Thus we say evening devotions, that is prayers and other exercises by which God is honored. By Mass devotions we mean the prayers and meditations recommended during the holy sacrifice.

Strictly speaking, devotion is not a special virtue, ac-

[1] 2. 2. q. 82 a. 1. [2] *Introduction to a Devout Life.*

cording to the Angelic Doctor,[3] and St. Francis de Sales teaches us that devotion perfects every good action and like sugar sweetens what seems most bitter: fasts and other mortifications, sickness and afflictions of all kinds become sweet and agreeable when they are accompanied with true devotion.

The virtue of religion taken in its wide sense, that is, as an inclination to render to God all the service due Him, differs but little from devotion, which nevertheless then adds two qualities to that service: promptitude and joy in accomplishing the Divine Will; but if we take the virtue of religion in a stricter sense, that is, as an inclination to render to God the homage due Him as the Creator and Preserver of all things,[4] then it differs from devotion, because the latter regards all the service we can render to God in all the circumstances of our life.

True and lively devotion cannot exist without the fervent love of God and, indeed, it is nothing else than charity, which gives us the strength to act in all things well; and when the charity has reached a high degree of perfection, so that we act carefully, frequently, promptly and joyfully in God's service, then that charity is called devotion. Truly devout Christians not only observe the commandments of God, but the evangelical counsels as well, and all other good works as far as their state of life will permit. Charity and devotion differ from each other no more than the flame from the fire which produces it; for charity is a spiritual fire, and when it is ardent and greatly inflamed, it is called devotion. Devotion adds nothing to the fire of charity except the flame, which renders charity prompt, active and diligent, not only in the observance of the commandments, but also in the keeping of the evangelical counsels and in the exercise of all heavenly inspirations.[5] Thus considered devotion is a general virtue or rather a quality that perfects every other virtue, not excepting charity itself, and as such we place it immediately after the virtue of religion, because it adds to its perfection, as well as to all the moral and divine virtues we have to consider hereafter.

[3] *Loc. cit.*, a. 2.

[4] 2. 2. q. 81 a. 4.

[5] *Introduction to a Devout Life*, c. 1.

II. Like a ship tossed about in a stormy sea, man is subject to interior and exterior tempests; but in all the varieties of his surroundings, he should never swerve from duty, no matter what storm rages within or without: if he be armed with an ardent devotion, he will seek always, in all things and in all circumstances the will of his Maker. True devotion, although not free from the thrusts directed against it by the enemies of our salvation, never languishes, and in adversity no less than in prosperity, the devout Christian preserves the same equanimity, the same constancy and the same promptitude; and he is at peace, because always and everywhere he can render to his God the reverence due Him. He is resigned in tears, constant and persevering in the bitterest trials and contradictions, and he multiplies acts of love of God, who, he is confident, directs all things for his greater good. He is also conscious that his perfection—which he takes to heart because thereby he serves his heavenly Father, and insures his spiritual interest best—depends no more on the influences brought to bear upon him, than low clouds intercept the flight of an eagle who can soar above them. Whatever agency or force confronts the devout Christian, his will is free and that, he has consecrated to his God. In consolation or aridity, in prosperity or misfortune, in sickness or in health, he is always the same, equally devoted to the interests of his heavenly Father. He truly leads a superhuman existence, only possible, because he has the example of his Savior and of the saints always before his eyes, and because of the Christian courage and magnanimity vouchsafed to him from above.

Pious but timorous souls often bewail their condition, when the sweet affections that formerly accompanied the practice of their arduous duties, are withdrawn, as if true devotion depended on emotions of sadness or joy, consolation or aridity. Although devotion does not consist in the suavity of consolation and in the sensible tenderness of the heart, nevertheless, they are good and useful, if they stir up the soul to greater fervor, comfort the mind and add to the prompt activity of the soul a certain interior joy and alacrity, which communicates itself even to one's ex-

terior. It was the taste of divine things which made the Prophet King proclaim: "How sweet are Thy words to my palate! More than honey to my mouth!" [6]

The saints who have tasted the sweetness of spiritual consolations, have taught us that they far surpass all the joys and pleasures of the world, which they despised as gall and bitterness. David who had experienced the ineffable delights of heavenly consolations, exclaimed: "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God....Far better is one day in Thy courts above one thousand," spent in the palaces of earthly kings. [7]

Aridities, instead of being injurious to true devotion, are the school of great saints, who, by bearing them with Christian fortitude, arrived at a great degree of perfection: it is in the night of aridities, or in severe trials due to the privation of all spiritual consolation, that they learned to love God more disinterestedly, and therefore with a purer love. The sweetness of consolation and the unction of tender and sensible devotion are favors, often bestowed by God, as we have seen, on those who have entered into the way of perfection and have already made some progress; but the total absence of consolation in the midst of aridities is often the lot of perfect souls, whom a benign and loving Father destines to great sanctity.

Spiritual consolations are not without their danger: vainglory may convert the heavenly favors into a curse; for man is but too easily inclined—prompted thereto by the evil suggestions of our archenemy—to attribute them to his progress in virtue, yea even to the sanctity already acquired. Besides, sensible affections, such as tears, sighs, and other sensible emotions, felt during vocal prayers or in listening to sweet and melodious music, are not from God, unless they make us more humble, more charitable, more devout in all that regards the service of God. True devotion renders one patient, amiable, charitable to his neighbor, contemptible in his own eyes, and like charity it "edifieth." [8] "Charity is patient, is kind;....envieth not, dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up; seeketh not its own; is not provoked to anger; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity;

[6] Ps. cxviii. 103. [7] Ps. lxxxiii. [8] 1 Cor. viii. 2.

but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things." [9]

III. The obstacles to devotion are also necessarily obstacles to the tender consolations, which accompany it and of which it is the source; and therefore, by concerning the obstacles to the former, we overcome also what most hinders the latter. If devotion lacks all consolation, such an uncommon aridity is usually due, not to ordinary causes, but to a special intervention of God's providence, for ends best known to Himself.

When any devout Christian is seriously annoyed by aridities, he should investigate the cause thereof, but preferably with the aid of his confessor or of some wise counsellor. The following considerations may greatly help the salutary work: 1. God often takes away all sweet consolations from those who attach their heart to them or who find too great a complacency in them, or perform their good works more for the tender affection that comes with them, than for the sake of conforming their will to the Divine Will. If devout souls become aware of that fact, after due examination of the motives which govern their actions, they should combat and counteract the misplaced affections of their heart, by a strong resolution to seek in all they do, not their own pleasure but the divine pleasure; and they should perform their good works in the consciousness that devotion does not consist in tender affections; and therefore, they should promptly and joyfully begin and conclude what they know to be agreeable to God; for that is all that our heavenly Father desires of us, and in that, essential devotion consists; all else is secondary.

2. The very opposite fault may also be the cause of aridity, as when God's favors are despised, either through indifference to His goodness in bestowing them, or through an excess of confidence in one's ability to dispense with them, or by attributing the heavenly consolations to our own merits, as if God were bound to reward on earth the services which we render Him.

Again, our heavenly Father grants those extraordinary consolations to make us more diligent, more fervent, more

[9] 1 Cor. xiii. 4-7.

joyful and more edifying in the observance of His commandments and of His counsels, and, if His favorite souls are instead more slothful, indifferent, selfish and uncharitable; more proud, vain and disobedient, is it not proper that our good Lord should take away the talents which have borne no fruit from the slothful and wicked servant?[10] The simple satisfaction of doing one's duty is already a great favor for which we should sincerely be grateful to the Giver of all good gifts, and how much more should we praise and thank Him for the extraordinary suavity and the delights which He so generously bestows upon devout souls.

3. Aridities often come from the devil, says St. Francis de Sales, and through them he endeavors to create in pious souls a disgust for true devotion and for the exercises prompted by it. Such afflictions may be allowed by God for the more rapid progress towards perfection of His servants of predilection, as He allowed the torments and sorrows which Satan inflicted upon Job. Happy are those who, in the midst of their dereliction and abandonment by God, can say in the sincerity of their hearts and with a heart full of confidence in God's goodness: "The Lord hath given; the Lord hath taken away; let His holy will be done."[11] Souls thus tempted by the evil one should persevere in their usual good works and pious exercises, with an absolute trust in the goodness of the Master they serve, and strive to imitate the sorrowful Redeemer, who in His agony prayed: "Let this chalice" (of sufferings and bitterness) "pass away from Me;" but added: "Nevertheless not as I will but as Thou wilt,"[12] or when hanging on the cross and bleeding to death, after exclaiming: "My God, My God, why hast Thou abandoned Me?" He continued His work of mercy and employed the three last hours of His agony in proving by word and deed His incomprehensible love for His sinful children. Thus, those who are troubled by aridities should omit none of their spiritual exercises, but prove by their prompt and joyful fidelity in the performance of all their obligations, the fervor of their devotion and ardent love for their heavenly Father.

[10] Matt. xxv. 14 *seq.* [11] Job i. 21. [12] Matt. xxvi. 39.

4. All worldly attachments, whether they spring from the love of riches, pleasures or glory, even if they be free from guilt, are incompatible with spiritual delights. God is not satisfied with a divided heart. Worldly desires, amusements and pleasures create a disgust for heavenly things and gradually extinguish the fire of the love of God; whilst they who have tasted how sweet the Lord is, love Him with greater ardor and find all other pleasures distressingly bitter as gall. "Let your soul reject all other consolations," says St. Bonaventure, "if it desires to taste the sweetness of the divine love, a felicity so pure that it is not given to them who desire any other." [13] "The suavities of the Holy Ghost," says St. Francis de Sales, "are incompatible with the artificial delights of the world." [14] Let us add that worldly amusements little by little destroy the germ of devotion itself. "Love not the world nor the things that are in the world," says the Holy Ghost by the pen of the beloved disciple; "If any one love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him." [15] Now, charity and devotion are one and the same thing, as we have seen, for devotion is the highest degree of charity and its complement or perfection. "There are two loves," says St. Augustine, "that of God and that of the world. If the love of the world enters into the soul, there is no way for God to enter." St. James inculcates the same doctrine: "Know you not," he says, "that the friendship of the world is the enemy of God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, becometh an enemy of God." [16]

5. An attachment to venial sin is also an obstacle to devotion and to its heavenly consolations; and by that attachment is meant an affection for thoughts, desires, words or deeds, that constitute a venial sin, coupled with an unwillingness to forsake them. Imperfections and venial sins committed without full deliberation do not rob the soul of its essential devotion; but deliberate venial sins, committed without scruple and without an effort of amendment, are opposed to that spirit, which makes man prompt and joyful in doing God's will in all things; for in this the essence

[13] In 6, 8 *Collat.* [14] *Introduction to a Devout Life,* c. 14.
[15] 1 John ii. 15. [16] James iv. 4.

of devotion consists. Besides, deliberate venial sins, as we remarked more than once, lead to mortal sin.

6. Another obstacle to devotion is too great a solicitude in the management of all temporal affairs. Let us remember the touching scene in the house of Mary and Martha. The former sat at Jesus' feet and the latter, who was occupied about the work of the house, complained to Him, because Mary let her do all the work alone. Hear the Savior's remarkable answer: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful about many things. But one thing is necessary: Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her." [17] Comment is unnecessary; Martha busied herself with the service of all that might tend to the bodily comfort of the Redeemer, and notwithstanding, she was reproved by Him for her excessive solicitude concerning His needs, while Mary was praised for being unconcerned about temporal matters, and for cherishing the words of eternal life that fell from the Savior's lips.

It is true that material affairs need attention from the part of the heads of families and of all those whose duty it is to provide for the useful and necessary interests of others; but anxiety and worry, as well as a feverish solicitude in their management should be avoided, and sufficient relaxation from temporal cares should be left to all to attend to the spiritual welfare of their souls, as we remarked, when we had under consideration the subject of meditation and cited St. Jerome's letter to Calancia. Besides, people who are constantly occupied about material interests, should never entirely forget the presence of God, but should frequently raise their thoughts to Him in the midst of their occupations, with an earnest desire to accomplish His holy will by every one of their acts. They should imitate the Prophet King, who could truthfully say: "My eyes are ever toward the Lord, for He shall pluck my feet out of the snares," [18] by which we may understand that God will deliver us from the temptations and the evils inseparable from dissipation of the mind and from the forgetfulness of the divine presence. We should discharge all our duties with a view to please God and refer all our occupations likewise to Him;

[17] Luke x. 41. [18] Ps. xxiv. 16.

all else is dissipation of the mind, because all else hinders us from stirring up the love of God in our hearts. "The consideration of things, proper to excite divine love, causes devotion," says the Angelic Doctor, "but the consideration of whatsoever has no reference to that end and even distracts the mind from it, prevents devotion." [19]

[19] 2. 2. q. 82 a. 3 to 1.

ARTICLE VII

The Virtue of Obedience

I. Obedience is a Potential Virtue of Justice—In What it Consists—To Whom is Obedience Due—Exceptions: In the Choice of Life—II. Obedience Necessary to the Spiritual and Material Welfare of the Individual as Well as of the Civic Life and Prosperity of the Nation—Beauty and Greatness of the Virtue: With It Our Most Indifferent Actions are Meritorious, and Without It All Virtues are Lost—III. The Three Degrees of Perfect Obedience: Promptitude, Simplicity and Joy in Obeying—IV. Motives of Perfect Obedience: Obedience to Superiors is Obedience to God; He Who Obeys Cannot Err; the Example of Jesus Christ and His Saints; Obedience to One's Confessor and Lastly, Obedience required of Religious.

I. Obedience is like the virtue of religion based on justice, or as St. Thomas aptly calls it, it is one of its potential virtues; because it regards the right of superiors to the submission of their subordinates. The Angelic Doctor says that: "Obedience is a virtue which renders the will of man prompt to execute the will of another, that is of him who commands," [1] or more briefly, the virtue of obedience renders a man prompt to execute the will of his superior. By order or will we understand all the commands of lawful authority, whether expressed by word or sign, provided they be not contrary to the will of God; for "We ought to obey God rather than men." [2] Although obedience is one and the same virtue no matter who commands lawfully, there are two general sources of legitimate authority: the human and the divine. Again authority considered in its human source is either civil, ecclesiastic or domestic. Civil authority tends principally to the civic welfare of people and divine and ecclesiastic authority to the spiritual welfare of the members of the mystical body of Christ, His Church upon earth; but domestic authority tends to both the spiritual and material welfare of the members of a family.

Holy Scripture inculcates the obligation of obeying all legitimate authority. St. Paul speaks of civil authority when

[1] 2. 2. q. 104 a. 2 to 3. [2] Acts v. 29.

he says: "Let every soul be subject to higher power, for there is no power but from God; and those that are, are ordained by God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God and they that resist, purchase to themselves damnation." [3] From this citation we learn that it is a most grievous sin to disobey the civil power in matters of importance. The Apostle also writes to Titus: "Admonish them" (the Christians under your care) "to be subject to princes and powers, to obey at a word." [4] St. Peter inculcates the same doctrine: "Be subject to every human creature for God's sake, whether to the king as excelling or to the governors sent by him." [5]

As to the necessity of obeying our ecclesiastical authorities, the Pope, and bishops and the priests delegated by them, it is taught so often directly and indirectly in Holy Writ that we quote only the words of our Savior addressed to His Apostles: "He that heareth you, heareth Me; he that despiseth you, despiseth Me." Domestic authority refers to the duties of a wife towards her husband, of children towards their parents and of servants towards their master. We begin with the last named. St. Paul writes to Titus: "Exhort servants to be obedient to their masters in all things pleasing, not gainsaying; not defrauding, but in all things showing good fidelity." [6] "Servants," St. Peter writes, "be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward." [7]

St. Paul demands of husbands to love their wives as their own flesh, but he commands the wives to be subject to their husbands: "Let wives be subject to their husbands," he writes to the Ephesians, [8] and also to the Colossians. [9] Again, writing to Titus he demands of wives "To be gentle and subject to their husbands," [10] and St. Peter teaches the same sound doctrine. [11]

As to the obedience of children to their parents, let us hear the chastisements with which disobedient sons and daughters are threatened: "If a man have a stubborn and unruly son, who will not hear the commandments of his

[3] Rom. xiii. 1, 2. [4] Titus iii. 1. [5] 1 Peter ii. 13.
[6] Titus ii. 9, 10. [7] 1 Peter ii. 18. [8] Eph. v. 22.
[9] Col. iii. 18. [10] Titus ii. 5. [11] 1 Peter iii. 1.

father or mother....the people of the city shall stone him." [12] On the other hand, they who honor their father and mother and give proof thereof by their filial attachment and prompt obedience, are promised a long and happy sojourn during their abode upon earth." [13]

The duty of obedience of children to their parents ceases, not only when the latter command what is illicit or sinful, but also when they oppose by undue means their offsprings' natural rights regarding the choice of a state of life, such as the priesthood, celibacy, marriage, or virginity in or outside a religious community. In matters relating to vocations, which are from God, children should listen to the advice of their parents, but should follow the divine inspirations, as soon as they have arrived at the proper age and they are conscious of understanding the will of God in their behalf. [14]

Servants are admonished by St. Paul to obey their masters for God's sake: "Servants be obedient to them who are your lords according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your hearts, as to Christ; not serving to the eye as pleasing men, but, as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." [15] St. Paul's admonition is applicable to all other submission of inferiors to superiors, for by referring our obedience to God, from whom all authority emanates, it becomes highly meritorious in His sight.

II. The beauty and greatness of obedience are best understood if we consider the scope of its activity. Compared to the virtues of religion and devotion, it is inferior to them, in that the former, by interior and exterior worship, honors God, and therefore it tends toward God more immediately and directly than all other mortal virtues; and devotion is but charity in practice. Notwithstanding, obedience as a virtue necessarily leads to charity: it is its companion and is begotten of charity and devotion, which are its complement and perfection. "He that loves Me," says Our Lord, "keeps My word, "that is, obeys Me by keeping My commandments."

[12] Deut. xxi. 18, 21. [13] Ex. xxiv. 12; Deut. v. 12; Eph. vi. 1, 2.
[14] See Introduction to this Manual. [15] Eph. vi. 5 *seq.*

Forsooth, one can keep the commandments, more through fear of God's judgment than because he loves Him; but then he has at least the beginning of love, or it is a step towards charity and the beginning of wisdom. He who fears God and through that holy fear is exact, prompt and constant in complying with all his duties, is on the safe road to charity, and this greatest of all divine virtues will not fail to perfect his intentions, and besides, fear gradually gives way to love. "The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom." Obedience although supernatural, is imperfect as long as we serve God for selfish motive only, but, as that selfish motive, such as the expectation of reward here and hereafter and the fear of punishment, is based upon divine revelation and is therefore acceptable to God, our bountiful Father will not fail to grant extraordinary graces to those who with alacrity and constancy observe His commandments, provided their motive be at least supernatural, for the charity of God and of neighbor will be the reward of their promptitude and alacrity in His service.

In matters spiritual, obedience preserves all other moral virtues, and no one can exist without it. "Obedience is in the moral world as the mother and guardian of all virtues," says St. Augustine;[16] all the rest have a special end in view, but obedience regards all what God demands of man, and St. Gregory teaches likewise: "Obedience is a virtue," he says, "which alone introduces into the soul and maintains in it all the others."[17]

(a) Obedience is a special virtue in so far as it regards the observance of the commandments of God, of the precepts of the Church and of the orders of all them that take God's place upon earth and wield authority over others. As a special virtue, it, more than any other mortal virtue, tends to the material and spiritual welfare of the individual and to the material interests of society at large; for there can be no order without it: without obedience there is no peace, no stability, no concord, no harmony in the family and in man's social life. What becomes of social life, if all will command and none will obey, but confusion, turmoil and strife? Even among irrational creatures, what confusion

[16] *City of God,* B. 14, c. 12. [17] *Moral.* L. 35, c. 10.

and disorder, yea, what chaos would ensue, if they could cease to observe the law which the Creator has imposed upon them to preserve their existence and the harmony in the universe, which elicits the admiration of us all? Well has it been said that in this vast universe everything obeys, and man, who disobeys his Maker, is the only one who sounds a note of discord, when, in the midst of that sublime harmony, he defiantly and rebelliously shouts: "I will not serve Thee."

(b) The excellence of a virtue may also be known by the sacrifice we make in its practice; for, all other things being equal, the greater the sacrifice, the greater the work or the deed. "There are," says St. Thomas, "three kinds of goods, which man can despise for God: in the lowest rank are the exterior goods; in the middle are those of the body; in the highest rank are those of the soul, among which the will is the principal one, because through this faculty we possess all the others. Therefore, obedience which despises selfwill for the love of God, is more praiseworthy than other virtues which sacrifice other goods for the same motive." [18] We have a remarkable example of this doctrine in Holy Writ: Saul, having been anointed king of the people of Israel by the prophet Samuel, received through him the order to destroy the wicked Amalec, his subjects and all their possessions. Saul, after his complete victory, instead of exterminating all the inhabitants and destroying their possessions, spared the king and the best of the flocks of sheep and of the herds, and offered a holocaust to the Lord of the choicest of the spoils. When Saul, being upbraided by the prophet, defended his own and the people's actions, by pointing to the victims he had sacrificed to the Lord, Samuel said to him: "Doth the Lord desire holocaust and victims and not rather that the voice of the Lord should be obeyed? For obedience is better than sacrifice." [19]

(c) Our Savior by His teaching and example has clearly impressed upon us the dignity and merit of obedience. He has frequently taught that He did not come down upon earth to do His own will, but the will of His Father who sent Him. [20] St. Paul says of our Redeemer that: "He

[18] 2. 2. q. 186 a. 5. [19] Kings xv. 1-22. [20] John iv. 34, 35; xxx. 38.

humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross." How praiseworthy that virtue must be, when the Savior Himself has taught it by His example! Its merit must also be exceedingly great, for the Apostle adds: "For which cause God also exalted Him and hath given Him a name which is above all names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth and under the earth." [21] The Redeemer's exaltation is thus ascribed to no other of the virtues which He practiced during His mortal life, than to His entire submission to His Father's will.

Another practical benefit derived from obedience, is that it renders all actions however insignificant or indifferent or even useless, salutary and meritorious for heaven. We pass more than one half of each day of our lives in sleeping, eating and in recreation; actions in themselves indifferent, that is, neither good nor bad; but if these occupations are performed in obedience to the will of a superior or in conformity to the rules prescribed by legitimate authority, they become virtuous and meritorious of eternal life, whilst the most noble actions of men are useless and devoid of merit, unless they be undertaken with the intention of accomplishing the divine will. [22]

(d) The excellence of obedience is still further demonstrated, when we consider attentively the degree of perfection of which it is capable. There is, as explained above, but one virtue of obedience whether its acts imply submission to divine, ecclesiastical, domestic, or civil authority; for to be virtuous one must have an explicit or implied desire to accomplish the will of God, who commands us to obey all legitimate superiors. It must also be admitted that the obedience of religious to their superiors becomes more praiseworthy and meritorious, because of their vow of obedience previously made; but then, the excellence of their submission depends no longer on that virtue alone, but on the virtue of religion as well.

The perfection of obedience may be viewed under different aspects, that is, with due regard to the goodness of the act, or to the difficulty of its execution, or with reference

[21] Phil. ii. 8. [22] *Cfr.* St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 104 a. 3.

to the dignity of the agent, etc., but here we solely intend to consider the qualities of perfect obedience, or the lofty sentiments of the soul that should accompany the performance of whatever legitimate authority demands of us.

1. The first quality is alacrity or an intimate and hearty willingness with its concomitants, promptitude and exactness, that is, "With a good will of serving God as to the Lord and not to men." [23] By this we understand that we should obey without complaining or murmuring. "The faithful obedient man," says St. Bernard, "knows no delay; he abominates procrastination, ignores tardiness." He who obeys reluctantly, although he performs the task imposed on him, is no longer obedient, and his exterior compliance is but "A cloak for malice." [24]

We should not forget that the alacrity with which we should comply with the orders and wishes of every legitimate authority, regards all occupations, whether agreeable or disagreeable, material or spiritual, emanating from superiors of great capacity or of no ability whatsoever. There is but little merit in observing a superior's command, which is to our liking; for no effort is required to execute a deed to which one's will is strongly inclined. In order that we may not lose the merit of our submission on that account, we should protest before God that we sincerely desire to accomplish His holy will and not to follow our inclination, but that we welcome the inclination and liking as a stimulant to serve Him with greater ardor and zeal.

If on the contrary, a serious repugnance is felt towards a particular duty, we should regard it as a test or trial of our true and heart-felt love of obedience. It behooves us then to choke and smother the repugnance, or, if we cannot overcome it entirely, the dislike for it should only urge us on to discharge our duties for the sole motive of conforming our will to the holy will of our heavenly Father. There are those who take readily to exterior occupations and others to serious study and to all labor connected with it; and when the time for prayer or other spiritual exercises arrive, they feel a dislike to being obliged to abandon their task. It may only be a temptation of the evil one; but the

[23] Eph. vi. 7. [24] Serm. 3 in *Circumc.* Serm. *de Obed.*

spirit of prayer and mortification may be endangered through a preference for any particular duty, or through a slight aversion to spiritual exercises. Whatever be the cause, the soul desirous of spiritual progress should be on its guard and seek advice with its spiritual director, for means should be forthwith adopted to curb the greater ardor for one class of duties than for another.

Let us add that, if by undertaking a pious exercise or mortification, one neglects any duty, the disobedience is not less sinful because of the greater merit one sees in the good work he has chosen; yea, the pretext invoked increases the danger: "The vices," says Cassian, "that hide under the appearance of virtue and the mask of spiritual perfection, must be held as more pernicious and harder to correct that those that tend openly to satisfy the evil inclination of the flesh." [25] Let us then beware of self-will even in the most virtuous occupations; for fasting, watching and other mortifications, by which any duty is neglected, are not virtuous, for they are nothing more that a cloak for malice and vice.

2. The second quality of perfect obedience is simplicity. "Think of the Lord in goodness and seek Him in simplicity of heart," says the Wise Man. [26] Simplicity of heart, with reference to obedience, consists in that one does the will of God or of any legitimate superior, of which he is cognizant and fully conscious, without further inquiring into the reason of a specified order or command, or into its usefulness or expediency. This is the simplicity of the child. When St. Paul inculcates the duty of obedience on servants, he says: "Servants, be obedient....in the simplicity of your heart, as to Christ." [27] He that obeys his superiors as he would God Himself, who looks into the darkest recesses of his heart, is sincere and feigns not; and thus sincerity is opposed to deceit, fraud and hypocrisy; but besides perfect obedience admits of no curiosity with regard to the intention of the superior and the reasons he may have in issuing his orders. "It is a sign of an imperfect heart and of a totally weak will," says St. Bernard, "studiously to discuss the orders of seniors, to hesitate at each one of the things enjoined, to demand a reason of some or to refuse a willing

[25] Collat. iv, c. 20. [26] Wis. i. 1. [27] Eph. vi. 5.

obedience, except when one has happened to hear what he may perhaps like." [28]

To perfect obedience and childlike simplicity belongs what is called "blind obedience," which consists in this that an inferior, being conscious that the orders of his superior are nowise sinful, complies with them with alacrity and an absolute confidence in their wisdom and opportunity, without any interior or exterior discussion, submitting his judgment to that of his superior, as he would to God. Of this perfect submission we have a memorable example in the obedience of Abraham, who was commanded by God to immolate his only son, although the sacrifice would seemingly have proved God to be unfaithful to His promise of a numerous progeny, previously made to the saintly patriarch. Another example is the childlike submission of St. Joseph in accepting Mary for his spouse after he had already thought of dismissing her. Saul disobeyed his Maker and he lost his kingdom which was given to David, a man according to God's heart, and faithful in keeping all His commandments.

The name of "blind obedience" is ridiculed by irreligious demagogues, but why do they approve of military discipline, which constrains soldiers to obey their superior officers without questioning the wisdom of their orders? We are not concerned about the name, if it be irksome to anyone, he may substitute another; but we maintain that when irreligious men condemn the practice of religious who never question the reasons of their superior, nor his ability, nor his sanctity respecting the orders he issues, they revile what they do not understand. Let us admit that superiors of some monasteries have sometimes enjoined seemingly ridiculous and useless labor upon the lay members of their community, as it happened to the Monk John, who through obedience irrigated during a whole year a dry pole; but what at first seemed nonsensical, must be judged to be wise and judicious, if through obedience John's apparently unprofitable labor made him more humble, more respectful to superiors and more submissive; for obedience renders all indifferent acts holy and acceptable to God, and profitable unto salvation. "The monks of Egypt," says Cassian, "are

[28] *De Praecept. et Dispens.*

prompt in complying without discussion with the orders of their superior, because they consider them as commandments emanating from heaven: they undertake even impossible things with the same confidence and devotion, as well as diligence in performing them perfectly, and that, without the least hesitation, and they do not think of the impossibility of their execution because of their respect for their superiors." [29]

3. The third quality of perfect obedience consists in the delight with which the orders of superiors are executed. "The third degree of obedience," according to St. Bernard, "is to obey with joy: not with sadness, says the Apostle and not because of necessity; for God loves the cheerful giver... Serenity of countenance, sweetness in speech give much color to obedience." [30] St. Bernard would have us obey with both interior sentiments of joy and exterior hilarity; but it is more probable that he gives to hilarity a different meaning than the word imports; for he opposes it to sadness, and he requires also serenity of countenance. Be that as it may, the third degree consists in an interior joy one finds in doing God's holy will, which he sees in the orders of every legitimate superior. This joy and delight is a consequence of the consciousness of pleasing God, who is loved above all created things, who is preferred before self and all our inclinations and desires, and who richly rewards the least thing undertaken for His sake.

The third degree, which is not attainable without true devotion and perfect charity, because of the most difficult and painful tasks it may involve, leads to magnanimity, heroism and even to martyrdom; and this happens, if, in a spirit of obedience, one gladly sacrifice his life in the care of the victims of pestilence, or of any other infectious disease. [31]

III. For still better understanding of the qualities of perfect obedience, we must now consider more carefully and attentively the reasons which should urge us on, to practice the virtue of obedience in the several degrees of its perfection.

(a) The first is that through obedience, as we remarked

[29] *Inst.*, L. 4, c. 10. [30] Serm. *de Obed.*

[31] St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 124 a. 5. St. Alphonsus Liguori, L. 6. no. 97.

before, all indifferent acts become virtuous and meritorious for heaven, provided we refer at least implicitly our obedience to God, and all acts, which are already virtuous, acquire a new excellence and a greater merit. All authority comes from God and therefore it may be said that he that obeys his legitimate superiors, obeys God Himself. "Obey your prelates," says the Apostle, "and be subject to them; for they watch, as having to render an account of your souls." [32] Prelates are the stewards of the Lord in the goods that regard eternal life, and Christ Himself declares: "He that hears you, hears Me." [33] Now the Church through her ministers, the Apostles and their successors, continues to teach the obedience of children to their parents, in all things spiritual and temporal; [34] of wives to their husbands; [35] of servants to their masters in all that regard the service for which they are hired; [36] of citizens of a nation to civil magistrates, in matters that concern the material interest of the individual and of society at large; [37] of religious to their superiors; of Christians to their ecclesiastical authority in all that regards the salvation of souls and whatever is connected with it.

It must be admitted that the vagaries of our imagination prevent us from constantly directing all our actions to God in submission to His holy will; but if we raise frequently our minds and hearts to God, and especially in the beginning of any new undertaking, the oft-renewed intention of performing all our actions in a spirit of humble obedience, will effectually enable us to perform all else in compliance with the Divine Will. Children should be taught from their youth frequently to refer all their actions to their heavenly Father, in view of the great merit attached thereto.

As to religious, they are obliged by their vow of obedience to obey their superiors in all that is not manifestly sinful; for, if not all their duties bind their conscience under pain of sin, frequent neglect in the observance of the rule or of the orders issued by superiors, can hardly be excused from a certain contempt of authority itself; and besides,

[32] Heb. xiii. 17. [33] Luke x. 16. [34] Eph. vi. 1; Colos. iii. 20.
[35] 1 Peter iii. 11. [36] Coloss. iii. 22. [37] Rom. xiii. 1.

they more than others must tend to perfection, which consist in doing all things for the sake of charity, that is for the love of God. What merit of eternal life is not lost by those religious, who, in many things, first examine whether this or that order be expedient and must be observed under pain of sin or not! Therefore St. John Climacus teaches that: "When a casual thought suggests to you to judge or to disapprove your superior, chase it away as promptly as you would impure thoughts." [38] These remarks are also applicable to all inferiors within the limits of their respective obligations; for if they are not bound by vow, they are bound by the virtue of obedience.

(b) Another reason, why we should esteem greatly and practice faithfully the virtue of obedience with the utmost perfection, is that he who obeys is certain not to err nor to go astray. This is evident, except in the case when the superior by mistake or otherwise commands something sinful, and the conscience of an inferior convinces him that to execute the order would be contrary to the law of God. A child should not obey the wicked father who sends him to pilfer or steal; a soldier should not obey, if he is ordered to pillage churches, or to injure the non-combatants of an enemy country; a servant must ignore the wicked master's attempt to make him destroy some neighbor's property; but except in the case of a manifestly illicit order, a conscientious inferior may always throw the blame of the result regarding the execution of an order on his superior. Supriors must render an account of their administration to God, and inferiors have no other obligation than to carry out their wishes with promptitude, simplicity and joy; and that necessarily follows from the truth that superiors occupy towards inferiors God's place, and that when we obey them, we obey God Himself, whose authority they wield. How reassuring and consoling this doctrine is to timid souls who are continually beset with doubts about the propriety or justice of their future conduct! But especially what a balm to a scrupulously inclined Christian, when he can assure himself that his confessor's order have the same authority, as if the Savior had come on earth and had oc-

[38] In *Quarto Gradu.*

cupied his confessor's seat in the tribunal of Penance! For the Savior has delegated all His power to His priests, and therefore a decision or order of a confessor has all the certainty of a revelation from God; yea more, for in a revelation there is always an element of uncertainty, such as hallucinations of the mind; the ruses of the devil, the uncertainty of fully understanding the warning or order; but when we hear the priest of God deciding in plain words a case, or pronouncing the sentence, or giving any order, all doubt is removed by the many questions that have been asked. God speaks through His minister, or rather the good Lord must confirm the decisions and the commands of His delegated priests.

(c) They who aspire to perfection will find another motive for perfect obedience in the example of the Savior during His mortal life. Jesus is the Model of all Christians, and His doings upon earth as well as His teachings should be forever present before our minds.

Our Redeemer's declaration that He came upon earth not to do His own will but the will of Him who sent Him, should urge His followers on to ascertain through meditation all His words, His actions, His teachings and all His dealings with others from the moment that "The Word was made flesh" until He consummated the sacrifie of His life and gave up the ghost.[39]

It would be impossible to examine in detail the many occasions in which our Savior by word and example, inculcated the necessity and extolled the excellence and beauty of the virtue of obedience. His whole life is for us a school, in which we learn from His doings the perfection of that sublime virtue, which is but the ardent love of God proven by and exemplified in our actions. If we could have entered into the councils of the Blessed Trinity, when it decided to redeem man by the Incarnation of one of the three Divine Persons—we speak in a human manner according to our limited knowledge—we would have heard the only begotten Son of the Father offer Himself for the sacrifice, and meekly say: "Here I am; send Me." The offer was accepted and the Angel Gabriel was sent upon earth to the maiden of

[39] John xx. 30.

Nazareth, whose name was Mary, to announce to her that she had been chosen to become the Mother of the Redeemer, and upon Mary's acceptance of the sublime dignity, the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished.[40] From that moment, when "The Word was made flesh," until the meek Savior exclaimed in His agony "It is consummated" and bowing His head He died,[41] every moment of His eventful life was spent in obedience to His Father's will; and He was not only obedient to His heavenly Father, but to His human Mother, as well as to St. Joseph, the guardian of His and His Mother's innocence. In accordance with the decree of His eternal Father, He assumed human nature and remained nine months in the womb of His Mother. He was born in a humble, abandoned stable with poverty, suffering and the contempt of the world as His constant companions. He allowed Himself to be adored by lowly shepherds, His blood flowed at the Circumcision and He was offered up in the temple like the other children of the Hebrew race. He was adored as King of heaven and earth by the Magi; but soon thereafter He was forced to flee the hatred and cruelty of King Herod and took refuge in Egypt, a strange land, where He remained until the death of the wicked king. When finally He returned with Joseph and Mary to Nazareth, little is recorded of Him until his thirtieth year, except that He was subject to them.[42] One incident of His childhood shows that whatever He did, was in obedience with His heavenly Father. When He was twelve years old, He accompanied St. Joseph and His Mother to Jerusalem for the feast of the Pasch. On the first day of their return from the holy city, He was lost and on the third day He was found in the temple of Jerusalem. When His Mother said to him: "Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing," He said to them: "How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"[43] What did He mean but that He had come on earth to do His Father's will? This is taught us frequently during His public life. "My meat," He said to His

[40] Luke i. 16 *seq.*
[41] John xx. 30.
[42] Luke ii. 15.
[43] Luke ii. 42 *seq.*

Apostles at Jacob's well, "is to do the will of Him who sent Me." [44] I seek not My own will," He declared again, "but the will of Him who sent Me." [45] "I came down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." [46] Hear now His last prayer in His agony in the garden of Gethsemani, "My Father, if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, Thy will be done." [47]

When we ponder over all that has been said and we reflect on man's reluctance against obeying all legitimate authority, we should feel keenly the reproach of St. Bernard's words: "Learn, O Man," he exclaimed, "learn to obey! Earth, know to be submissive! Dust, humiliate thyself! The evangelist, in speaking of thy Maker, says that He was subject to them, that is undoubtedly to Mary and Joseph. Proud ashes, blush. God humbles Himself and you exalt yourselves. The omnipotent is subject to man and you by wishing to dominate, you prefer yourselves to your Creator." [48]

Let us learn then from the example of our Savior to humble ourselves and to submit willingly, and with simplicity and joy to all legitimate authority; for "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death and even to death of the cross," [49] and thus we shall share in the glory and exaltation of the Savior; for because of His heroic obedience, "God also hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above all names," [50] to wit: the name of Jesus.

Practical Conclusions

1. Penitents who strive to advance in spiritual life, must not expect any progress or amendment unless they allow themselves to be guided by their respective confessor or director; and if they truly desire to tend to perfection, they should in every confession consult him on some point relating to it. Usually confessors in their admonitions to their penitent, will dwell on the remedies to avoid the sins declared by him or will incite in him true sorrow for his

[44] John iv. 34. [45] *Ibid.*, v. 30. [46] *Ibid.*, vi. 38.
[47] Matt. xxvi. 42. [48] *Homil. supra Missus.* [49] Phil. ii. 8.
[50] *Ibid.*, ix.

sins and inculcate the necessity of fleeing their near occasions; or they may remind him of a proximate feast to be celebrated with proper devotion; but unless they know their penitent well, they will seldom attempt particular suggestions that may promote his rapid progress. Therefore penitents should not only confess their sins, but should also make known their attachments, their likes and dislikes, their repugnances to persons or things, their temptations, their negligences in the practice of any duty or virtue, or in omitting them altogether, and in general, all their thoughts, inclinations and actions that have any bearing on their spiritual advancement. When the confessor has marked out a plan for the future conduct of his penitent, the latter should bear in mind that his progress depends on the fidelity and alacrity with which he executes the orders of his confessor, who has now become his superior in all matters that concern his client's spiritual welfare; and in order that the penitent may not deviate from the advice given him in the confessional, he should strive to excite in his mind and heart a great esteem and love for the virtue of obedience, in the consciousness that it brings down many heavenly blessings and that through its practice in all its perfection, the faithful penitent not only acquires the habit of it, but he will besides, in a short time, be enriched with all the virtues of his state of life; for it is a universally accepted doctrine that he who is perfect in one virtue is perfect in all. To secure the inestimable boon, penitents should particularly observe, as far as they can, all their confessor's recommendations with regard to the more or less frequent use of the sacraments, as well as all that concerns meditation, prayer, special devotions, mortifications and all their exterior actions.

2. Obedience is the criterion of the true charity: it is the touch-stone by which superiors test their inferior's purity of life. They cannot long be deceived in their judgment through the hypocrisy of those who only obey to gain favor, esteem or approbation; for hypocrites are easily detected. Prompt, childlike and joyful obedience, is for the confessor a particular sign that his penitents are on the right road to perfection, no matter what their former life may have been. But they who have seriously taken to heart to

scrupulously follow the admonitions of their confessor, should also guard against vainglory and not consider themselves advanced in perfection, because their director takes an interest in their spiritual welfare. Let beginners be reminded that they are only novices in the spiritual life and have now entered the purgative state, and therefore they must daily strive to combat their evil inclinations; for, until these are conquered, perfect obedience to all human and divine laws and to the orders of their superiors cannot be attained. After months or years of sincere submission to one's director, one gradually acquires the habit of the virtue of obedience, a great boon indeed; for it makes the practice of the virtue pleasant and agreeable, as well as free from troublesome efforts; but here again we must arm ourselves against a new danger: the easiness with which obedience is practiced often becomes an obstacle to spiritual advancement; for, if routine takes the place of higher motives for the occupations of our daily lives, we lose all or the greatest part of the merit attached to their performance. To prevent that loss, novices in the science of perfection should frequently protest before almighty God, that all they seek is to become more and more conformable to His holy will and that by obeying His representatives on earth, they see in the orders of their human superiors the manifestation of His will. By offering every new action to God, they will renew their allegiance and submission to the Arbiter of heaven and earth, and all their occupations will become highly meritorious.

APPENDIX

Other Moral Virtues Depending on Justice

I. Veracity—II. Gratitude—III. Liberality—IV. Affability

We now append the consideration of some minor virtues that depend on justice; for although less important than the virtues we have already explained, they should not be entirely ignored.

I. Veracity is a special virtue which inclines man to speak the truth; and as such it depends on the virtue of justice; because all people with whom we have any intercourse, have the right to receive from their neighbor truthful information, and they hate to be deceived.

He that speaks the truth is said to be truthful, and he that usually tries to deceive others is called a prevaricator or a liar. If untruthfulness consists neither in words, nor in writing nor in other signs, but deception is shown in one's conduct, then it is called simulation or hypocrisy.

Veracity consists in the perfect conformity of our ideas with the meaning conveyed in our speech, writing or gestures. Thus one may be truthful without telling the truth; for if his intellect errs or his memory fails him, and he expresses faithfully the things as understood and known to him, he cannot be said to prevaricate.

The beauty of veracity is found in that all created truth is, as it were, a reflection of the truth that is in God, and all truth to be real must conform to the truth which is in God; for God is truth; and therefore David called Him the "God of truth,"[1] and Jesus said of Himself: "I am the way, the truth and the life."[2] When Jesus stood before Pilate, the latter asked the Redeemer: What is truth?[3] but Pilate waited not for the answer. St. Augustine answers the question, as follows: "Truth is God Himself, who is the first Lord and the first Essence, as well as the first Wisdom, for He is that incommutable Truth, which is properly called the law of all arts and the art of the omnipotent Artificer."[4] But the truth that matters is the truth which Christ the Son of God came to preach upon earth, and it consists in the knowledge of God and His holy doctrine, and of His commandments, which, if we believe the former and strictly observe the latter, will bring us to our eternal destiny, which is nothing else than the sight and possession of God, and everlasting happiness in the participation in His infinite perfections.

The excellence of veracity is well established in Holy Scripture by the condemnation of the vice opposed to it, mendacity. Among the things which the Lord hateth, the Book of Proverbs mentions

[1] Ps. xxx. 6.
[2] John xiv. 6.
[3] John xviii. 36.
[4] *Sentent.*, 386.

these two: a lying tongue....and a deceitful witness that uttereth lies."[5] "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but they that deal faithfully please Him."[6] If any one should object that a lie and especially a jocose lie, is not a mortal sin, if thereby we injure or scandalize no one, I will answer that they who are addicted to lying, by contracting the habit, deceive by little and little their neighbor in matters of importance and even resort to lying to defraud him, and thus "A mouth that belieth killeth the soul;"[7] and St. John excludes from the city of God, Heaven, "every one that lieth and maketh a lie."[8] No wonder then that David thus addresses the just God: "Thou wilt destroy all that speak a lie."[9]

In conclusion let us hearken to the admonition of the Apostle: "Wherefore putting away lying, speak ye the truth every man with his neighbor; for we are members one of another;"[10] and hence we should shame to abase and abuse the gift of speech, which was given us to communicate knowledge and truth to our fellow-members of the faith, and we should shun deceit and falsehood as social evils.

To veracity is closely allied fidelity to one's promise, and it consists not only in being truthful and not deceitful in making a promise, but also in keeping faithfully the promise already made. Promises should not be made lightly, for they often impose a duty, which justice obligates us to perform. Parents as well as all other superiors, are especially warned to keep sacred what they hold out as a recompense for their inferiors' compliance with their demands. There are superiors, who, when they make a formal promise of reward, resort to a mental reservation, such as "if I do not change my mind," thinking thereby to escape the obligation they would otherwise assume. This is deceitful and unworthy of anyone who places any value on his plighted word or honor. Holy Scripture seldom makes a distinction between truthfulness and fidelity in pledged faith, and thereby lets us understand that it is dishonorable to lie as well as to be unfaithful to one's promise. Do you seek wisdom? The Holy Ghost teaches us where it is to be found: "Lying men shall not be mindful of her (wisdom)....but men that speak the truth shall be found with her, and shall advance, even till they come to the sight of God." "Wisdom came forth from God.... and shall abound in a faithful mouth, and the Sovereign Lord will give praise unto it."[11]

II. Gratitude. Gratitude is a virtue which inclines us to kindly remember the benefits received and to repay them as far as we can.

To God we are indebted for all we are and all we have, and we owe Him due worship, service with devotion, and gratitude with love; piety obliges us to give to our parents obedience, respect and gratitude; to all dignitaries as the source of much good, our reverence, and if they are also our superiors, we owe them obedience and gratitude; but to all others from whom favors have come to us, we

[5] Prov. vi. 16. [6] *Ibid.*, xii. 22. [7] Wisdom i. 11.
[8] Apoc. xxii. 15. [9] Ps. v. 7. [10] Eph. iv. 25.
[11] Wis. x. 8, 10.

simply owe a debt of gratitude. "If we have received special favors from any one," says St. Thomas, "they obligate us to him in a special manner by the right of honesty," [12] and by honesty the Angelic Doctor understands whatever conform to right reason and pleases a virtuous heart; for sound reason approves of grateful sentiments and actions, and our heart rejoices at them, whether we pay a debt of gratitude ourselves or others repay it to us or we simply see it practised. Benevolence or kindliness or that affection of the heart by which we desire the good of those who have rendered us any service, is the natural consequence of unfeigned and true gratitude; and although there is a precept which says: "Love thy neighbor as thyself," a greater affection, shown by reciprocal favors, is due to him through whose kindness we have been benefited.

Ingratitude dries up in great part the source from which favors come; for "The hope of the unthankful," says Wisdom, "shall melt away as the winter's ice [13] and on the other hand, deeds of gratitude are like a warm and bright sun, after a copious and beneficent rain. Nothing is more detestable than an ungrateful wretch. Seneca calls ingratitude the worst of crimes and the Philosopher held that when you call anyone ungrateful, you hurl at him all kinds of maledictions.

III. Liberality is a virtue which inclines us to freely part, within the bonds of just reason, with worldly goods, for charitable or other praiseworthy ends. The virtue is based on that charity which embraces the whole world in its affections. It differs from works of mercy in that the object of the latter is only the needy.

The two vices opposed to liberality are avarice and prodigality. The miser sins by defect and the prodigal by excess. That liberality may not prove to be a curse to the giver or to the beneficiary, the following conditions should be observed:

1. The end of the giver must be at least honest and liberality should be exercised in a spirit of benevolence, and to make it more meritorious, with sentiments of the purest charity, seeking nothing in return from men for the good that is done: "For the Lord maketh recompense and will give thee seven times as much." [14]

2. Liberality must be reasonable for one is not allowed to impoverish his family or to reduce himself to penury; except in the case of our neighbor's extreme spiritual necessity—for prodigality is not a virtue but a vice.

3. Order should be observed with regard to persons, to time and quantity to be expended; for it would be bad judgment and unreasonable to enrich one person and leave the most needy unaided.

4. What we part with, be it much or little, should be given, not grudgingly, but with a cheerful heart; for "God loveth a cheerful giver," [15] or as Ecclesiasticus has it: "In every gift show a cheerful countenance." [16] From what has been said, we learn that Christian liberality differs from charity and mercy, in that charity demands from us all that we love our neighbor as ourselves, in matters

[12] 2. 2. q. 106 a. 1 to 2. [13] Wis. xvi. 29. [14] Eccli. xxxv. 13.
[15] 2 Cor. ix. 7. [16] Eccli. xxxv. 11.

spiritual and temporal, and in that mercy obliges us to relieve the great necessity of the needy; but liberality prompts us to exceed through the great abundance of the gift what strict love for our neighbor inmposes upon us as a duty.

IV. Affability. Affability is a virtue which inclines us to treat our neighbor, in all intercourse with him, with courtesy, consideration and condescension, but also with due regard to his and our condition. "Make thyself affable to the congregation of the poor, (*i. e.*, to the poor in general) and humble thy soul to the ancients and bow thy head to a great man," (*i. e.*, humble thyself and bow thy head to seniors, priests, superiors, rulers, magnates and persons of distinction.) [17]

Affability, according to St. Thomas, is imposed by honesty (propriety), so that one man may treat another as it behooves. [18] Thus, an affable man strives to please by his speech, his manners, his conversations and by all his dealings with others, or as the Angelic Doctor has it: "Every man is bound by the natural duty of honesty (propriety) to live pleasantly with others." [19]

Affability includes accessibility, condescension, commity, civility, and courtesy; likewise, congeniality, gentleness and mildness, and even kindliness, graciousness, benignity and benevolence, in so far as these qualities aid us to make our intercourse with our neighbor agreeable and pleasurable. Mercy and charity, which lack affability and graciousness, often wound by their sternness and rudeness. Therefore St. Paul warns the Colossians: "Let your speech be always in grace seasoned with salt," [20] that is, let your speech be always seasoned with the salt of graciousness.

To affability belong the following dispositions and practices: 1. To give a kindly ear to all and to address every person of whatever condition with a pleasant countenance. 2. To answer all questions with civility and cheerfulness, although they may seem inopportune. 3. To salute all acquaintances one chances to meet, with a look of benevolent recognition, if they are our equals or inferiors, and if they are our superiors, with that respect which custom and civility or the dignity of the person demands. To return all salutations of others with like dispositions and sentiments. Intimate friends may recognize each other with a subdued smile denoting gladness at the encounter, but this should not take place between persons of a different sex, at least in public, as it often attracts attention and causes unpleasant comment. Ladies should remain reserved and dignified with those of the male sex, except, perhaps, with their nearest relatives. 4. Finally, to assume such a look and mien and to so regulate the voice, words and gestures that they portray the suavity and sweetness of one's sentiments and emotions, and that one can truthfully say with the Apostle: "I also in all things please all men." [21]

Two things are directly opposed to affability: asperity and moroseness by defect and adulation or flattery by excess.

[17] Eccli. iv. 7. [18] 2. 2. q. 124 a. 2. [19] *Ibid.*
[20] Coloss. iv. 6. [21] 1 Cor. x. 33.

Asperity is that habit of withholding a word, look or gesture which may in the least give pleasure to others. Asperity or gruffness in manner, voice, or countenance, denotes a haughty and undisciplined mind, and it is the bane of friendship and good will between neighbors. The morose disapprove of everything that is said or done by others; they contradict their neighbor's opinion; speak sneeringly of his good deeds and of the respect he enjoys in the community; they question the sincerity of his intentions and ridicule his best efforts. Adulators on the contrary always approve of what is said or done by their victim; they flatter his vanity and praise his talents, his ingenuity and his tact; they applaud or at least excuse his vices and often resort to calumny to defend his misdeeds against the contentions of them who blame or oppose him. To adulators are applicable the words of the Holy Ghost: "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, are both abominable before God;"[22] and finally they uphold the propriety and honesty of their servile obsequiousness against their own conscience, by the expectation of sordid gain. There is nothing viler that a flatterer.

[22] Prov. xvii. 15.

ARTICLE VIII

Chastity

Summary. Derivation of the Word Chastity—I. There are three Kinds of Chastity: Virginity, the Chastity of the Married State and the Chastity of Viduity—Celibacy—The State of Virginity More Perfect than the Married State—II. Excellence of Virginity—The Beauty of the Virtue—III. Remedies by Which the Virtue is Preserved—Flight of Danger is the Greatest Preventive of Lust—Temptations should be Rejected Promptly and Energetically—IV. Love Chastity and Abhor the Vice of Lust.

The word chastity (Latin, castitas), says St. Thomas, "comes from 'castigare' (to chastise), because sound reason chastises the concupiscences of the flesh like an unruly child." [1] Hence chastity is a virtue that inclines man to resist all illicit carnal pleasures. In this sense chastity is a potential virtue of temperance, which moderates all the intellectual and sensual appetites of man within the bounds of right reason.

We must distinguish three kinds of chastity: the chastity of the married state, that of viduity or widowhood and that of virginity. The chastity of married men and women imposes upon then the obligation of abstaining from all forbidden lustful pleasures; the chastity of viduity consists in the full determination never to marry again and the chastity of virginity carries with it the full resolve never to sully one's self by any carnal pleasure and through it to lead a more perfect life. The first is obligatory, the second and third although more perfect are not imposed by any law.

In the state of simple celibacy, in which no determination is made never to marry, celibates are enjoined to abstain from carnal pleasures as long as they remain single, and the same must be said of widowers and widows until they enter into a second lawful matrimonial union.

St. Cyprian, when comparing the different states of chastity, places virginity in the first degree, continency in the second and the last degree belongs to the married people.

[1] 2. 2. q. 151 a. 1.

"We praise virginity," says St. Ambrose, "without despising widows, and we praise the latter, whilst we conserve for marriage the honor which is due to it." [2] Marriage is honorable; for it entered into the plan of the Creator for the conservation of the human race, and hence not all are bound to choose the most perfect state. Although St. Paul wished that all men were as he, single, he adds: "But every one has his proper gift from God; one after this manner and one after that." [3] Our Redeemer advised continency and virginity as more conducive to perfection than the married state, when He addressed the young man who had asked what was still wanting in him to obtain eternal life: "If thou wilt to be perfect," said our Redeemer, "sell what thou hast and give to the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come follow Me," [4] that is, follow Me like Peter and the other disciples who have abandoned their wives, or like St. John who never has taken a wife. Christ counsels perfection, but does not command it; and of the unmarried and the widows the Apostle says "It is good for them, if they so continue even as I, but if they do not contain themselves (cannot observe continency) let them marry; for it is better to marry than to be burned" by the fire of an impure love and of lustful desires. [5]

Virginity is the firm will to abstain during one's life from all voluptuousness, licit as well as illicit. This is called moral virginity to distinguish it from material virginity, which belongs to simple celibacy and consists in a certain integrity of the body, with no determination to abstain in the future from lawful carnal pleasures in the married state.

We should remark here that virginity is not lost by impure thoughts or desires, provided the body remain undefiled, and all that is required for those who have been guilty of such evil thoughts or desires is to bewail their sins and to do penance for them; and if thereafter, to the end of their lives, they preserve their virginity intact, they will not be deprived of the bright and resplendent aureole of virginity, and of the right to follow the Lamb whither-

[2] *De Viduis.*
[3] 1 Cor. vii. 7.
[4] Matt. xix. 21.
[5] 1 Cor. vii. 8, 9.

soever He goeth and to sing canticles which no one else can sing.[6]

Among our Protestant brethren of our day there are still many followers of Luther who condemn virginity; but was it the love of conjugal chastity that caused the heresiarch to break his vow of celibacy or was it the consciousness that he was not able to control any longer the passion of lust? His conduct and the ribaldry of his familiar conversations and of some of his writings, will necessarily incline an unprejudiced mind to accept the latter conclusion. It is strange, indeed, that Protestants are so ready to appeal to the Bible in defense of their cherished opinions and ignore it when it condemns their likings or prejudices. St. Paul clearly teaches the pre-eminence of virginity over the conjugal state: "But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they so continue, even as I....Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord; but I give counsel, as having obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful....Art thou bound to a wife? Seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife... He that giveth his virgin in marriage, doth well and he that giveth her not, doth better."[7] The example of Our Lord, of St. John the Baptist, of the beloved Apostle St. John and of numberless saints attests the esteem we should have for the state of virginity.

II. If we now consider chastity in itself that we may have for it the esteem which it deserves, we must have recourse again to the teachings of Holy Writ; for faith alone can teach us the beauty and luster of virginity. Jesus our Savior praised the chastity of St. John the Baptist, as well as the virtues which usually accompany it.[8] He Himself has practiced it and willed to be born of a virgin mother. Should we not imitate our Master, who showed a particular predilection for the Apostle St. John, because he had like Himself preserved his virginity according to the testimony of the early Fathers? Virginity is at least indirectly recommended by our Savior, when He answered the remark of His disciples regarding the expediency of marriage.[9] "Blessed are the pure of heart," says Our Lord again, "for

[6] Apoc. xiv. 3, 4. [7] 1 Cor. vii. 8 *seq.* [8] Matt. xi. 8. [9] Matt. ix. 9-12.

they shall see God." [10] The pure of heart are those who are free from all impure thoughts and desires; now, I ask, who are more likely to preserve that purity, those who intend to marry or those who renounce marriage forever, and flee from whatever may bring on evil thoughts or desires? If you now compare the number of men and women eminent for their great sanctity, you will find but few, very few, who are joined in marriage and among the few, the most of them were women who were given in marriage by their parents and who accepted their husbands in the fear of the Lord through holy obedience, rather than because of the preference for the conjugal state.

III. The chastity of virginity and widowhood tends to a closer union with God, for by fleeing even licit pleasures and all dangerous attachments, to serve Him with greater freedom, pious souls are moved and inclined to seek the intimacy of their divine Spouse, whom they love with ardor and confidence. It is in this that the sanctity and splendor of chastity mainly shine forth, for the fire of divine love destroys all sensuality, and not only the soul, inflamed with a pure love for God "tastes how sweet the Lord is," but even the body participates in the heavenly joy of its mistress. What a heavenly treasure one finds when he has severed all connections with the false joys of this world and has overcome the evil inclinations of his vitiated nature! No one but they that have experienced it, can conceive the delight of the soul that knows no other lover than her divine Spouse, whom she can love tenderly and remain chaste and of whom she can grow fonder and fonder without tarnishing the luster of her virginal chastity. What Christian well instructed can help loving a virtue so beautiful? "Who can esteem," says St. Ambrose, "a greater beauty than the luster of a virgin, who is loved by a King, approved by a Judge, is dedicated to the Lord and is consecrated to God?" [11]

It is plain from what we have already said on the virtue of chastity that it necessarily tends to the perfection and sanctification of the soul, as impurity, because of the vehemence of the passion of lust, leads numberless Christians addicted to the vice to eternal perdition.

[10] Matt. v. 8. [11] *De Virgin.*

To whom shall we compare the pure of heart, but to the angels of heaven? "What is more glorious," says St. Bernard, "than chastity? It renders man born impure pure; it changes the natural dispositions of his heart, and of a human creature it makes an angel." [12] St. Chrysostom [13] goes even farther and shows that the chastity of man is worthy of greater praise than the chastity of the angels, as the latter, being spirits, are not troubled with the vexatious inclinations of man's vitiated nature. "Angels," says the saintly Doctor, "do not marry and have no spouses: they are not made of flesh and blood; they do not inhabit the earth; they are not subject to the vexations of concupiscence; they need neither food nor drink; they are not so constituted that an agreeable sound, a melodious chant, an attractive form can seduce them; in a word, no allurement of the kind could captivate them. But as man is by nature inferior to those blessed spirits, he has to summon all his strength and all his zeal to imitate them, as far as lies in his power.... Do you see now the excellence of virginity, how it perfects the inhabitants of this earth, who are clothed with a body, and makes them similar to the incorporeal spirits? For, I ask, under what aspect were Elias, Eleseus and John, those true lovers of virginity, different from the angels? Under none, except that they had a corporeal and a mortal nature. Forsooth, if we consider attentively all their other qualities, it will be seen that they had not less perfection than those blessed spirits, and precisely, because they appeared to have been of an inferior condition, they are only the more praiseworthy." [14]

IV. In the article on the sense of touch we have spoken at length on the principal remedies against the vice of lust, and now we will mainly consider the means by which the virtue of chastity may be preserved.

1. By forestalling and overcoming the proximate, and as far as possible, even the remote dangers of impure desires and acts, we remove the principal obstacles to chastity and by the macerations of the flesh, by fasts, vigils and such like mortifications, we diminish the exuberant strength and vitality of the body, and as a consequence, our reason and

[12] Epist. xlii. [13] Born 344. [14] *Loc. cit.*

our will are proportionately invigorated and thus the soul gains complete dominion over the flesh and its concupiscences.[15]

2. The contemplation of divine things. By the contemplation of divine things we mean here the contemplation of all those truths which, of their nature, increase in us sentiments of an ardent love for God, such as admiration because of His infinite amiability, together with an unflinching determination not to jeopardize the possession of the infinite Good in the realms of our heavenly Father's glory. The frequent contemplation of the everlasting joys of heaven, in company with the saints and angels, will necessarily beget contempt for worldly pleasures and a longing and ardent desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ.[16] Prayer will call down upon us the Spirit of God to make us understand and relish the things that are of God. "The sensual man perceiveth not the things that are of the Spirit of God; for it is foolishness to him and he cannot understand, because it is (to be) spiritually examined,"[17] and not by the biased mind of the worldling attached to what the flesh craves. To those of the faith who are led by the Spirit of God, it is given to examine and discover the beauty of angelic chastity, which they prize at its worth, as leading to a close union with the all-holy God. Chaste and holy souls, led by the same Spirit, seek God Himself, whom they gradually love more and mode ardently, and finally they find only peace and repose in the contemplation of God. Thus, like a loving child, that cherishes its mother most tenderly, and hastily returns to her when it has been separated from her for a moment, the pious and chaste soul returns to her beloved Spouse in haste, if duty has temporarily robbed her of her beloved.

This state of perfect repose in the contemplation of the infinite God, cannot be reached until all affection for worldly and transitory things is cut off, and all attachment even of self is completely severed; for as long as the soul still covets even the innocent pleasures of this life, it cannot fully taste how sweet the Lord is. Until the delights here below be-

[15] *Cfr.* Part II, Art. I, Ch. 1, Sense of Touch.

[16] Phil. i. *23*; 2 Cor. v. 1 *seq.* [17] 1 Cor. ii. 14.

come bitter to pure and holy souls, they will find already in the contemplation of the beauty of heaven and of the happiness they expect to enjoy among the blessed spirits, in the participation of the infinite Good, superabundant contentment and joy that will repay them well for their contempt of the vile pleasures, which our carnal nature covets, and which, in spite of being represented to us as desirable, engender but supreme disgust and loathing.

3. The study of the Holy Scripture is another means to preserve the beautiful virtue of chastity, and it helps us in two ways: first, because it cannot be done without much labor of the mind, and all serious occupations are a safeguard against the demon of voluptuousness, and secondly, because Holy Scripture contains the word of God and teaches us the things of God and the way to holiness and perfection. "All Scripture inspired by God," says the Apostle, "is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice, that the men of God may be perfect, furnished (*i. e.*, aptly disposed) to every good work."[18] If we read the Holy Scriptures in the spirit in which they were written and dictated by the Holy Ghost,[19] by eschewing all worldly wisdom, we shall not only understand, but relish the truths they contain, and armed with these heavenly truths, we should reprove our indifference, correct our evil ways, learn in all things what is due to God, to ourselves and to our neighbor, and thus equipped undertake all good works and neglect no opportunity of doing good and of advancing towards perfection.

It is in the perfect law of the Gospel, preached by Our Lord Himself, that we must seek the pure and unadulterated doctrine which elevates man above his natural instincts and propensities. The Old Testament commends the chastity of the Patriarch Joseph, the chaste widowhood of Judith, whilst the deluge and the destruction of Sodom and neighboring cities are pointed to as evidences of God's hatred of lustful desires and actions; but except among the prophets and those of their school, virginity was not held in the esteem it obtained among Christians. After the creation of Adam and Eve, God desired to people the earth with their descen-

[18] 2 Tim. iii. 16. [19] *Imit.*, Bk 1, c. 2.

dants, for God blessed Adam and Eve, saying: "Increase and multiply and fill the earth;" [20] and again after the deluge, "God blessed Noah and his sons, and He said to them: Increase and multiply and fill the earth." [21] At the time of our Savior the population of the world had increased wonderfully, and then the virtue of chastity came into its own. Virginity was recommended by Christ, His Apostles and their successors, and thousands of anchorites hastened to the deserts; innumerable monks and nuns filled the ever increasing number of monasteries, and ever since true Christians have looked upon celibacy, the chastity of widowhood and upon virginity as most honorable and as a mark of perfection. "Search the Scriptures," says our Savior, "for you (rightly) think to find in them life everlasting. [22] How well this applies to us who believe the teaching of St. Peter that the Scriptures contain not the word of man, but what "The holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Ghost." [23] We seek then in Holy Scriptures the knowledge imparted to us through the Holy Ghost that leads us to life everlasting. Thus the word of God will show us not only the beauty and usefulness of the virtue of chastity, but of all moral and divine virtues tending to our sanctification and eternal happiness. Now we have learned already that the practice of any virtue increases the ardor of charity or the love of God in our souls, and charity in its turn perfects all the other virtues. Again, if through the reading of the Holy Scriptures we acquire the habit of any virtue in all its perfection, we are perfect in all; for the perfection of a single virtue cannot be obtained without a perfect love of God, for whose sake we highly prize and faithfully practice it, and this perfect charity enables and constrains us, as it were, joyfully to conform our thoughts, desires, words and actions to His holy will. Hence the reading of God's word in the inspired writings and the relish we find in the doctrine laid down in them, move us to the practice of one or more virtues in all their sublime perfection; and this happy result being attained, we likewise possess all the virtues of our state of life, including chastity. Let us not conclude from this that chaste souls are thereby freed from all tempta-

[20] Gen. i. 28. [21] Gen. ix. 1. [22] 1 John v. 39. [23] 2 Peter i. 21.

tions of lust; for St. Paul, although favored with visions and revelations from heaven, had to endure the sting of his flesh, which like an angel of Satan buffeted him.[24] But are such temptations not a proof of weakness or imperfection? Far from it; for when the great Apostle had thrice besought the Lord to remove the temptations of the flesh, the consoling answer came to him, as he says himself: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for power is made perfect in infirmity," that is, our strength increases and our perfection is assured by vanquishing with God's help the weakness and evil inclinations of our corrupt nature. Therefore St. Paul concludes: "Gladly therefore do I glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may dwell in me." [25]

4. The chastity of married people, of widowers and widows, and above all the angelic chastity of virginity is a gift of God, which we cannot obtain by our own efforts, and only humble and assiduous prayer will secure it. "As I knew," says the Wise Man, "that I could not otherwise be continent except God gave it—and this also was a point of wisdom to know whose gift it was—I went to the Lord and besought Him." [26] The necessity of prayer to observe chastity in all its degrees, made St. Augustine pray: "Lord, Thou commandest continency; give what Thou commandest and command what Thou wilt." [27]

To oral prayer absolutely necessary to vanquish the demon of lust, we must join spiritual reading, meditation and the frequent reception of the sacraments of Penance and of the Holy Eucharist. Holy Communion is the celestial Bread that engenders virgins and fortifies them against all the attacks of the demon of voluptuousness; for the health of the soul which is endangered and its strength that is weakened by daily imperfections and venial sins, are fully restored and invigorated when we partake daily of that heavenly food. "Except," says our Savior, "you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood you shall not have life in you....For My flesh is meat indeed and My blood is drink indeed:...He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood shall live forever." [28]

[24] 2 Cor. xii. 7. [25] *Ibid.*, viii. 9; 1 Cor. ix. 27. [26] Wis. viii. 21.
[27] Conf. x. 20. [28] John vi. 54 *seq.*

ARTICLE IX

Voluntary Poverty—The Spirit of Poverty—The Vow of Poverty

Summary—I. The Spirit of Poverty Can Exist in the Midst of Opulence and does not Solely Consist in the Contempt of Earthly Goods—II. Avarice or Cupidity—Its Daughters—The Hatred it Deserves—III. The Vow of Poverty—Its Perfection is Known Through the Perfect Imitation of Jesus Christ—The Vow of Poverty Can Practically be Observed only in a Religious Community—Life of the Early Christians—Monasticism—Hatred of the World for Godliness—Consistency of a Christian who Abandons the World—Advantage Thereof—IV. What is a Vow?—By the Vow of Poverty Religious Cannot Own or Possess Anything for their Private Use—Cannot do what Properly Belongs to Ownership—A Private Purse—1. Is it a Sin to Break a Vow?—2. What Sin?—3. Examples of Venial Sins of Religious—V. Means to Possess the Spirit of Poverty: 1. Meditation on the Truths of the Gospel; 2. Meditation on the Poverty of Jesus Christ; 3. Practical Suggestions—Remarks Regarding Things Given to Religious: with Regard to the Wealth of the Rich and to their Possessions.

I. Poverty itself is not a virtue and neither are riches; for they both rather tend to vice than to virtue. Therefore the Wise Man of the Book of Proverbs prayed to God: "Give me neither beggary nor riches; give me only the necessaries of life." [1] Riches are apt to make a man swell with pride, to incline him to seek his happiness in this life and to neglect his eternal felicity; whilst extreme poverty is an occasion and temptation of stealing, lying and even of perjury. [2] But the spirit of poverty, or voluntary poverty with the same spirit, is a virtue greatly to be recommended to all, whether rich or poor. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." [3]

The spirit of poverty can exist in the midst of opulence, for the rich can despise their riches and use their wealth with liberality for the relief of their needy neighbor and for other laudable purposes. He who considers himself but

[1] Prov. xxx. 7. [2] St. Thomas, p. 3, q. 40 a. 4 to 1.

[3] Matt, v, 3.

a steward appointed to manage his property for the temporal and spiritual welfare of others, and reserves for himself only what is necessary for his honest support, possesses the spirit of poverty in a high degree.

But a greater perfection is still to be attributed to them, who wilfully and freely divest themselves of all their possessions and become poor in imitation of their Master, who became poor for our sake that He might enrich us by His poverty through the humiliations and sufferings inseparable from it. "For you know," says the Apostle, "the grace (generosity) of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who being rich became poor for your sake, that through His poverty you might be rich."[4] The voluntary poor cannot enrich others, as our Savior has done, but they can enrich themselves for "Every one that hath left house, or lands for My name's sake," says Our Lord, "shall receive a hundred fold and shall possess life everlasting."[5] Besides, their good example will go far to induce others to despise their worldly goods for Christ's sake, and for the sake of an eternal reward, or if the latter are hindered from abandoning their homes and those depending upon them, they may at least be induced by the good example to become less attached to their worldly goods, and to be more generous in aiding the needy or to spend their wealth more freely for other charitable purposes.

Finally, the highest degree of voluntary poverty is found in the vow of poverty in a religious community, for by it religious not only divest themselves of all their worldly goods, but freely give up the right of ever owning or possessing anything for their own benefit. To them may be applied the words of Our Lord: "If thou wish to be perfect, sell what thou hast and give to the poor and come follow Me;"[6] for they truly follow Christ their Savior, if they have left home, parents, relatives and friends and all they possessed, and if, untrammeled by the care of worldly goods, they are ready to sacrifice their whole life, whether active or contemplative, for the spiritual and temporal welfare of their neighbor and for the honor and glory of their God.

[4] 2 Cor. viii. 9. [5] Matt. xix. 29. [6] Matt. xix. 21.

The spirit of poverty does not solely and entirely consist in the contempt of earthly goods; for even Pagans have done that, as we remarked when we spoke of the love of riches as an obstacle to perfection; but the true virtue is found in the detachment from all worldly goods to seek without hindrance the everlasting riches of heaven. Unless, through the knowledge of the danger that lurks in the possession of temporal goods, because of the vices almost inseparable from the love of them, we learn also to appreciate the true Christian spirit of voluntary poverty, we cannot seriously and efficaciously strive nor sigh for the delights of an eternal reward.

The vice opposed to the virtue or spirit of poverty is avarice or cupidity, which consists in an inordinate desire of riches. It is a capital sin, because in engenders many other sins, which therefore are called its daughters. From "stubbornness" in retaining what one possesses, comes "hardness of heart" in presence of the misery of one's neighbor; and from the desire of acquiring what one has not, the following vices proceed: "solicitude" regarding the possession of temporalities eagerly coveted, which is indeed vain, for "The miser is not satiated by wealth;" [7] "violence" resorted to in order to obtain for one's self what belongs to others; "fraud" in deceiving a neighbor for the sake of gain; "perjury" if an oath be added to fraud, and "treachery;" for in quest of money the avaricious will not hesitate to stoop to this crime and thus they become traitors to their country, their friends and benefactors, like Judas who delivered his Master into the hands of the Jews for the paltry sum of thirty pieces of silver. [8]

Moreover, St. Paul teaches that "cupidity"—or as the Greek text has it, the love of money—"is the root of all evil;" [9] not that every sin is directly caused by the vice of cupidity, but because he that is the slave of the passion is like an evil root from which all kinds of evils may sprout, and often do. The Apostle explains his meaning by saying that because of cupidity "Some have erred from the faith" and when faith is lost, no matter how holy one may other-

[7] Eccli. v. 9. [8] *Cfr.* St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 55 a. 8.
[9] 1 Tim. vi. 10.

wise have been, all is lost; for "Without faith it is impossible to please God." [10]

Should we then not abhor a vice capable of bringing such evil upon us, and to preclude the least danger of being contaminated by filthy lucre, should we not freely part—if our obligations will permit it—with all we possess, that the use or the sight of it may not engender an inordinate love of it in our hearts? As long as we possess anything we can call our own, we are not free from care and solicitude: robbers may come and steal it from us or the rapacity of wicked men may seek to deprive us of it, or natural causes of untoward events may destroy it. "Through the love of mercy," says the Apostle, "many have entangled themselves in many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, fly these things, and pursue justice, godliness, faith, charity, patience, mildness. Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art called." [11]

The Vow of Poverty.

III. The virtue of poverty reaches its complement and perfection through the vow of poverty, by which one renounces even the desire ever to possess anything. Besides, the perfection of a Christian lies in perfect imitation of his Model, Jesus his Savior, who could say of Himself, "Foxes have holes and birds have nests but the Son of God hath not where to lay His head;" [12] and before the crucifixion even the garments that covered His nakedness were ruthlessly torn from His sacred body. The poverty of our Redeemer's life from His infancy until His death on the Cross has been so often the theme of sermons and instructions we have heard, and it has formed so frequently the subject of our spiritual readings and meditations, that it may be deemed unnecessary to insist on that historical truth.

Therefore all those who strive for perfection must necessarily seek a means to imitate their Master in His voluntary poverty, and we maintain that it is not practical in the busy world, and can be done, ordinarily speaking, only in a religious community by making the vow of poverty.

[10] Heb. xi. 6. [11] 1 Tim. vi. 11. [12] Matt. viii. 20.

The early Christians understood well the teachings of Christ: "All they have believed were there together and had all things common. Their possessions and goods they sold and divided them among all, according as every one had need." "The multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul; neither did any one say that aught of the things he possessed was his own; but all things were common unto them....For neither was there any one needy among them; for as many as were owners of lands and houses, sold them and brought the price of the things they sold and laid it down before the feet of the Apostles." [13] Besides our Blessed Lord has formally taught the necessity of renouncing all earthy goods as indispensable to intimate fellowship with Him: "Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth cannot be My disciple." [14]

The mode of living of the early Christians who sold what they had, and brought the price thereof to the Apostles, could not generally be adopted when all classes of people had accepted the religion of the humble Nazarene. Then the most fervent among the followers of Christ, who wished to portray in their lives the austere life of their Master and of the Apostles, of whom St. Paul says: "We are always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be manifest in our bodies," [15] separated from the rest of the Christians and betook themselves to desert places and there lived a severe solitary life. The first of the cenobite communities of which we have an authentic record are those which St. Anthony established in Egypt, and he is therefore called the patriarch of Egyptian asceticism, and before his time, although many anchorites lived in desert places, like the hermit St. Paul, whom he visited before his death, they generally lived separate and not under a common rule.

About the year 306 St. Hilarion, disciple of St. Anthony, introduced monasticism in Palestine, and shortly afterwards similar communities were established in Syria and other parts of Asia. St. Basil, whom we have often quoted, prescribed for these communities special constitutions, which were almost universally adopted throughout the Orient. In

[13] Acts ii. 44; iv. 32, 34. [14] Luke xiv. 33. [15] 2 Cor. iv. 10.

the middle of the fourth century, monasticism under the rule of St. Basil was introduced in Western Europe, and in the beginning of the sixth century St. Benedict prescribed a rule less severe than that of St. Basil for the religious of his order, which embraced both men and women, as he considered that the austerity of the ascetics of the East was ill-suited to the rigorous western climate. His rule was soon adopted throughout Western Europe. We need not follow further the history of the religious institutes established over the whole earth, for what has been said suffices to show that community life with the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience is in accordance with the spirit of the Gospel and owes its origin to the teachings of Christ and of His Apostles, who taught the advisability of abandoning the wicked world, against which they continually warned the Christians: "Woe to the world because of scandals," [16] said the Redeemer, and again speaking of the Paraclete He promised to send, He called Him: "The Spirit of truth... whom the world cannot receive." [17] In the same discourse after the last supper the Savior addressed His Apostles saying: "If the world hate you, know ye that it hath hated Me before you....If you had been of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world and I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." [18]

The wisdom of the world knows not God: the lovers of riches, pleasures, honor, praise and glory, either like the Jews of old, demand signs to believe, or like the Greeks, seek false wisdom in various philosophical systems that flatter man's passions; [19] but the true disciples of Christ preach Christ crucified by their humble lives and by the renunciation of what the world loves. This self-abnegation the world calls foolishness, and to the proud and to those who love worldly goods and the satisfaction they bring, it is a stumbling block, as it was to the Jews in Christ's time.

How can we, followers of Christ, love a world that hates the disciples of the crucified Jesus, a world that looks with contempt upon whatever they hold most dear? "Love not

[16] Matt. xviii. 7 *seq.*
[17] John xiv. 17.
[18] John xv. 18.
[19] 1 Cor. i. 23.

the world," says St. John, "nor the things that are in the world. He that loves the world, the charity of God is not in him." [20] Let us seriously reflect on this declaration of the Apostle, so greatly beloved by his Master: the lover of the world and of the things which the world cherishes: honor, praise, glory, wealth and pleasures, is deprived of the greatest gift the infinitely rich God can bestow upon a human being in this life, to wit: charity or sanctifying grace, which makes us children of God and heirs of heaven, as well as intimate and beloved friends of God, for by it we are enabled to love Him and our neighbor according to His will and desire. How consistent for pious Christians, if, dreading to lose that charity, they flee the world where our Redeemer's love and goodness are ignored, where His precepts and teachings are despised, His promises mistrusted and seek refuge where they will find the Spouse whom their souls tenderly love, and where they will hear Him praised and glorified!

In a religious community the inmates secure stability and peace of the soul, as well as all the necessaries of life; and they are entirely free from the care and solicitude of temporalities, which often make life a burden. Religious follow closely the example of the early Christians; they live together in monasteries and convents, and have all things in common. Their possessions and goods, which they bring with them when they enter a religious community are sold or kept for the need of all in general, and neither can any one call a single thing his own. No one is needy, and he that has brought much into the order has no greater right or privileges than he who has brought but little or nothing; for in the eyes of God all have brought much, who retained nothing, left nothing behind and abandoned even the right to possess or own anything. Whether they have brought little or much, they all can say with St. Peter to Our Lord: "Behold we have left all things and have followed Thee; what therefore shall we have? This passage of Holy Writ is beautifully explained by St. Augustine and St. Gregory the Great: "Some one will perhaps ask in his silent thoughts," says the saintly Pope, "what and how much have

[20] 1 John xxi. 15.

both these fishermen, Peter and Andrew, who had almost nothing, abandoned at the call of the Lord. But in this matter, dear brethren, we must weigh rather the affection than the amount. He has left much who has retained nothing for himself; he has left much who has abandoned all, however little it may be. Indeed we enjoy the possession of what we have, and what we have not, we seek through desire. Therefore Peter and Andrew abandoned much, when they relinquished the desire of owning." [21]

IV. An important question is now presented for our consideration: Does he who is unfaithful to his vow of poverty commit a sin?

1. Some one might judge that as the rules of an order do not bind under the pain of sin, the acts opposed to the virtue of poverty are likewise free from moral guilt. Such often would be the case, were it not for the vow of poverty.

A vow is a deliberate and solemn promise made to God of something pleasing to Him. Thus it imposes on him who makes the vow, the strict obligation of complying with the promise. "If thou hast vowed anything to God, defer not to pay it, for an unfaithful and foolish promise displeaseth Him; but whatsoever thou hast vowed, pay it." [22]

We have given abundant proof that voluntary poverty is very acceptable to God, and always and everywhere the Church has recommended the spirit of poverty, and has upheld the vow of poverty as an act of religion, the greatest of all moral virtues, as by it God is worshipped as the Creator and Ruler of heaven and earth.

Let us remark here that in the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, there is no essential difference between solemn and simple vows; both are equally binding upon the consciences of those who make the vows, but the practice of the Church is that in religious congregations, a religious of simple vows retains the ownership of the property he had at the time of entering the novitiate and retains it even after making his perpetual vows.

2. Although religious, by making their first vow of poverty, renounce the right of absolute ownership to their property, the title to it may still vest in them until their

[21] Hom. iii. in Evan. [22] Eccle. v. 3.

solemn vows. Canon Law allows any religious order or congregation, as well as its provinces and communities, to acquire and possess temporal goods in common, with the right to dispose of their stable or funded incomes, unless the rules and constitutions of the order forbid or restrict such power;[23] and the reguular orders, whose constitutions or rules forbid them to own property in common, can obtain the necessary dispensation of the Holy See for a good reason.

3. By their vow of poverty, religious are forbidden to do anything that partakes of the nature of ownership without the express, tacit or lawfully presumed permission of their superiors, such as to sell, buy, lease or rent, lend or borrow, give or receive for their personal use, etc. Nor can they keep for themselves even the smallest portion of the fruit of their labor, for according to the old adage: Whatever a monk acquires the monastery acquires. Nevertheless we must except manuscripts and musical compositions, relics, small holy pictures: the former properly belong to religious as authors or composers; but they may not sell or donate them without leave from the proper authority. We have a late decision as to manuscripts of considerable value, which a religious has laboriously compiled during the time of his vows. He is forbidden to part with them by donation or by any other title.[24]

As to holy pictures which sisters give to each other on their feast-days, since they have no selling value, the custom is commendable, because of the pious sentiments and affections it awakens in the hearts of the donor as well as of the recipient. Nevertheless it would be reprehensible, if a nun or sister should hoard up a large quantity of holy pictures, and should become so attached to them that she would reluctantly give them up or would be saddened if the superior required them of her.

4. In some communities especially among religious men, the practice has been introduced of keeping a small purse for ordinary and trifling expenses, so that superiors would not be annoyed by continual requests from their subjects. Where the custom is of long standing, it cannot be

[23] J. C. Can. 531. [24] *Cong. Stae. Cong. de rel.*, 13, July, 1913.

condemned; but it should be understood that religious should be disposed to gladly give up their purse, whenever the superior requires it. Still, as St. Alphonsus Liguori well remarks, this custom of private ownership cannot be introduced by superiors in religious communities, where it does not already exist, without grievous sin.

Professed members of religious orders may without permission give to others their share of dainties, such as fruits, desserts, or candies allotted to each one, and this may be extended to other similar delicacies.

If the permission of the superior cannot be asked, religious in some cases may presume upon his consent and act accordingly, provided they are morally certain that the superior would grant the permission, if he could be asked; but in order that members of religious orders may not become lax in their own favor, they should acquaint the superior of the liberty they took in presuming his consent; and thus his decision will be their guide in similar cases thereafter.

By their vow of poverty, religious are forbidden to act as administrators, trustees or general agents for outsiders, whether companies or individuals, nor are they allowed to receive money or other personal or real property to spend or utilize as they see fit; since by this means they become in a certain sense owners. Nevertheless religious may receive cash or its equivalent to be spent for a determined charitable or pious purpose, such as for adorning the altar of a chapel or shrine, or to be given to a much distressed person or family; for in these cases a religious acts only as an intermediary and not as an owner. It need hardly be mentioned that religious may receive all presents offered them for the order, province or community; but should the donor expressly state that the present is given for a particular religious, he to whom it is offered should refuse it, unless there be a probability that his superior may allow him the use of it.

Let us remark that superiors sin grievously if through their dissimulation or indifference, the observance of the rule, which fosters discipline, is frequently neglected.

V. Means to preserve the spirit of poverty: 1. Religious

who desire to maintain the spirit of poverty should frequently meditate on the truths of the Gospel, which teach us that riches avail us nothing for heaven unless duty, charity or piety instigate the lawful use of them and that they are rather a hindrance to perfection: "What shall it profit a man," says Our Lord, "if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul?" [25] Yea more, what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose through the love of riches, the merit of one hour spent in the service of God? A single grace from heaven is worth more than all the kingdoms of this earth.

Riches bring upon us neither contentment nor peace nor happiness in this world, but rather beget an insatiable desire for more. He that is content with what he has, is rich. "One is in a manner rich," says the Wise Man, "when he hath nothing, and another is as it were poor, when he hath great riches," [26] for "The eye is not filled with seeing; neither is the ear filled with hearing." [27]

2. Another efficacious means to preserve the spirit of poverty, will be found in the frequent meditation on the poverty of our Redeemer, who will forever remain our perfect Model of all the virtues and whom we have to follow closely, if we desire to arrive at perfection; but we should join to meditation humble prayer, that through detachment from all worldly possessions, we may follow His footsteps and deserve a share in the merits of His voluntary poverty, through which He wishes to enrich us.

3. A last means by which the spirit of poverty may be preserved lies in the practice of the virtue, not only with regard to the things we possess, for which we should be grateful to God, as we do not deserve them, rather than attach our hearts to them; but also with regard to the greater riches or advantages possessed by others. This conclusion follows from the explanation already given on the virtue of poverty; for we have learned that the spirit of it consists mainly in the sentiments of the soul for worldly goods; and in this two things must be avoided: an enthusiastic admiration for the perishable goods possessed by others, inseparable from a longing to share them, and an in-

[25] Matt. xvi. 26. [26] Prov. xiii. 7. [27] Eccle. i. 8.

ordinate attachment to the things placed at the disposition of each religious. We shall consider the latter first.

(A) Religious should never attach their heart to anything in their possession, even if it be given to them for their personal use. They should at all times be indifferent with regard to the place they occupy in the chapel or in the refectory, with regard to the room they occupy, the habit they wear, the work or occupation imposed on them, the companion given them for an errand or anything else; and they should gladly part with the little they have, if such be the will of their superiors. Religious who seek a better or sunnier room, a softer bed, lighter or more abundant covering on their couch, a new habit when their old one is more than decent, will soon lose entirely the spirit of poverty.

(B) To preserve more efficaciously the virtue of poverty, religious should use sparingly of what they are allowed in food, clothing or anything else, and be content with what is absolutely necessary, following in this the spirit recommended by St. Paul, who wrote to Timothy: "Godliness and contentment is great gain; for we brought nothing into this world, and certainly we can carry nothing out. But having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content." [28] In the *Imitation of Christ,* there are four things taught by Our Lord to His disciple, as the way to peace and true liberty: "Endeavor, My son, rather to do the will of another than thy own. Always seek the lowest place and to be inferior to every one. Always choose to have less than more. Always wish and pray that the will of God may be entirely fulfilled in thee." [29]

These four things may be regarded as conditions required for the perfection of the virtue of voluntary poverty, although only the third advice directly regards the spirit of voluntary poverty; for he that is content with the necessaries of life, food and clothing, and would desire rather less than more, should also do rather the will of another, his superior, than his own, in all that regards the things given him for his personal use, and then indeed self-abnegation will become an easy and agreeable virtue to practice. Neither will he envy another's superiority, but will rather seek the last place,

[28] 1 Tim. vi. 6. [29] *Imitation,* Book 1, c. 23.

because thereby he conforms his will to the will of his heavenly Father and he desires nothing further.

(C) An undue admiration for what people in the world possess, such as their large estates and immense herds, their beautiful mansions, their costly furniture, the number, variety, and elegance of their conveyances, the great distinction of their many friends and the splendor of their receptions, is apt to make religious dissatisfied with their humble surroundings at home in their poor monastery. "Lift not up thy eyes to riches which thou canst not have," says the Book of Proverbs.[30] One may admire the beauty of architecture, the taste and art of the designer of a piece of furniture and praise the talents of the designers and builders; but when one is tempted to envy the owner of worldly grandeur, it would be well that he should remember that when our blessed Lord was tempted by the devil, who showed Him from a high mountain all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and said to Him: "All these will I give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me." Jesus answered: "God alone shalt thou adore and Him alone shalt thou serve."[31] Whatever beauty and order there is in the world all comes from the munificence of our heavenly Father. Man connot so much as make a piece of marble or stone, and if workman can fashion it and an architect can with many pieces put in order, erect a magnificent palace, the skilled laborer or architect owes his talents and energies to the Architect and Builder of the universe.

As to the magnificence of our public churches and even of private chapels, we cannot put enough glory in them, not so much because they are built by the hand of wise and renowned men, but because they are erected to honor the Architect of the universe and the Source of all good; and we should rejoice at the sight of their beauty and magnificence; as they induce beholders to worship the Lord of heaven and earth. The affection for things given to religious for their use is more dangerous, because it is more natural; for we naturally value the only things, placed at our disposition, no matter how poor they may be. There-

[30] Prov. xxiii. 51. [31] Matt. iv. 8 *seq.*

fore these things should be considered as borrowed or rather as lent by the kindness of the superior towards his subjects, as the former occupies toward his inferiors the place of God Himself. If any religious is known to show too much attachment to trifles, which are not absolutely necessary, a superior is more than justified to deprive him of them or to substitute something else in their stead. This regards the cells and all things contained therein.

These observations concern superiors as well, and although their reception room for the members of the community, must necessarily be larger and the amount of furniture proportionate to the accommodation of consulting religious, simplicity, compatible with voluntary poverty, should be the distinguishing mark of the room.

Although the parlors wherein strangers are received must be more comfortably furnished, all elegance should be banished therefrom; for it is ill-suited to the spirit of poverty that the members of religious communities, who wish to conserve the love of poverty, should make a display of elegance and luxury, as if they wished to appear rich in the eyes of visitors.

FOURTH PART

THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES

Introduction

The word "theological" from the Greek *"Theos"* (God) and *"logos"* (word, reference) means "what regards or refers to God," and therefore theological virtues are those which have God for their direct object. The moral virtues have for their ultimate end the honor and glory of God; but only mediately, through some good work, imposed as a duty or only counseled, like all acts prompted by the moral virtues and evangelical counsels. The theological virtues are three: faith, hope and charity. As virtues, they are infused into the soul with sanctifying grace, and as such they are a habit or quality of the soul, which enables and inclines it to make acts of faith, hope and charity, when occasion or opportunity present itself; and hence the acts of those virtues are sometimes called faith, hope and charity; and finally the things we have to believe, hope for and love are also called by the names of their respective virtues, as when we say: faith teaches us this or that truth, or he has the true faith; grace and the sacraments are our only hope; charity obliges us to do this or that.

Whether we look upon faith, hope and charity as virtues, or as acts, or as things proposed to our belief, hope and charity, they are under all aspects truly theological. As virtues, their habit or inclination moves us to believe and hope in God and to love Him, and these motions have evidently their source in Him, as by nature we are incapable of raising our thoughts, desires or affections to anything supernatural or above our nature. Likewise the acts of the virtues are theological; for it is proper of the virtues to inspire, to enlighten and to move us to elicit acts of faith,

hope and charity, and besides the acts by which we believe in God, hope in Him and love Him are not possible without an actual grace, which again comes from God; but as neither the inclination of the virtues nor their acts are forced upon us, and we can resist the impulse of grace, our belief to be acceptable to God, must rest on His veracity, our hope on His fidelity and our love on His authority or goodness. It is also charity whether we love God for Himself or love our neighbor for His sake. Finally as to all matters proposed for our belief and our hope, and as to all the commandments—because by their nature they all tend to the honor of God, the spiritual welfare of our neighbor or of our own—it is our good God who has taught us what we must believe, hope for and do to please Him. Thus faith, hope and charity come from God and lead to our union with Him; but charity more directly, and hence more perfectly than either faith or hope. Faith unites us to God, because He is the principle from which all truth is derived, since we believe what God revealed to us; hope unites us to God because He is the source of our perfect good, *i. e.*, life eternal; but charity makes us adhere to and inhere in God for His sake, because He is Infinite Goodness and we are united to Him through love and friendship; for the more we love Him, the more love we receive in return.[1]

Considered as virtues, faith is lost if one denies one article of the Christian revelation; hope is lost if one mistrusts God in one of His promises, and charity is lost, when one commits one mortal sin or grievously offends God by transgressing one of His commandments. Again if faith is lost, both hope and charity are lost, and if hope alone is lost charity is lost as well; for in this world charity cannot exist without both faith and hope.[2] God is disobeyed not only by our neglecting to do what He commands or by our doing what He forbids, but also by our failing to believe what He has taught and by mistrusting His promises; but faith is not necessarily lost if both hope and charity are lost. Faith is lost by infidelity only, hope by despair and charity by any grievous sin.

But although the virtues of faith and hope can exist

[1] *Cfr.* St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 17 a. 6. [2] Co. of Trent, Sess. 6, c. 7.

without charity, those virtues remain imperfect without it, as St. Thomas explains at length.[3] The Council of Trent teaches this truth by condemning the contrary opinion: "If any one says that grace being lost through sin, faith also is always lost with it, or that the faith which remains, though it be not a lively faith, is not a true faith, or that he, who has faith, without charity is not a Christian; let him be anathema."[4]

The case is different with moral virtues, for supernatural moral virtues cannot exist without charity. A man may after committing a mortal sin continue to be benevolent towards the poor, he may continue to practice obedience, he may even say mechanically some prayers; but all this will avail him nothing, unless with the grace of God he detests his sins sincerely and obtains pardon for them, either through the sacrament of Penance or through an act of perfect contrition: then charity is restored and with it are again infused with sanctifying grace, the moral as well as the theological virtues of faith and hope.[5]

[3] St. Thomas, 1. 2. q. 65 a. 4.

[4] Council of Trent, Sess. 6, can. 28.

[5] St. Thomas, 1. 2. q. 65 a. 2, 3.

ARTICLE I

Faith

I. Definition of Faith—Pelagian Heresy—Faith Rests on the Veracity and Wisdom of God—Motives of Credibility to be Distinguished from the Reason of our Belief—Faith Without Charity is Imperfect—II. The Necessity of Faith—1. Proofs from Holy Writ—2. The Spirit of Faith—3. The Effects of Faith on the Christian Soul—Or Usefulness of the Virtue of Faith—1. Faith is a Light that Keeps Man from Error—2. Useful for the Present Life—3. Faith the Foundation of Our Hope and Charity—III. Faith Alone Will Not Save Us—Reasons Therefor—A Lively Faith is Proven by Good Works—IV. Qualities Faith Should Have: 1. Simplicity; 2. Firmness; 3. Fortitude—V. Means by Which a Lively Faith is Acquired, Preserved and Perfected: 1. By Prayer: 2. By Making Frequent Acts of Faith; 3. By Good Works; 4. Practical Suggestions—VI. Temptations Against Faith—1. Advice to Penitents Who Have Been Assailed by Temptations Against Faith—2. How to Act in Temptations—3. Temptations from Aridity.

I. "Faith," according to the Apostle, "is the substance (underlying principle) of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not."[1] Faith teaches us what we may hope for and whatever we cannot otherwise know as a certainty about things concerning our salvation; for since faith rests on God's authority, whatever faith teaches is absolutely certain and undeniable. St. Augustine says that faith is a virtue by which we believe what we do not see, and St. John Damascene says that faith is assent which takes place without examination. Faith is then a divine virtue by which we firmly believe the truth which God has revealed. In the introduction we have explained why faith is called divine or theological, namely because it has God for object and the motive of our belief is none other than the wisdom and truthfulness of God, who therefore cannot deceive nor be deceived. It is a virtue infused in us at Baptism and, as such, it inclines us to believe; this inclination,

[1] Heb. xi. 1.

resulting from its being infused by God, is necessary, for we are not able to raise our minds to the supernatural without it, and much less can our intellect and will be brought to give their assent to revealed truth without God's grace.

The Pelagians pretended that we could by our natural efforts, without God's aid, begin to believe or at least conceive a desire to believe, which would lead to true faith; but the Council of Trent has clearly anathematized the heresy in the following Canon: "If any one says, that without the prevenient grace of the Holy Ghost, and without His help, man can believe, hope, love, or be penitent as he ought, so that the grace of justification may be bestowed upon him; let him be anathema." [2] From this we learn that in order to believe grace must precede even the least supernatural thought, and this is clearly stated by St. Paul when he says: "Not that we are able to think anything of ourselves as of ourselves, but our sufficiency comes from God." [3]

We have remarked already that faith rests on God's authority, for the motive of faith is the wisdom and veracity of God, who has revealed the truths which the Church proposes to our belief. We should not confound the motive of our faith with the motives, generally called, motives of credibility. The motive of our faith consists in the reason or the why of our faith, and the motives or credibility regard the reality of the revelation itself; for the latter consist in the arguments or reasons which convince us that God did reveal this or that doctrine or the dogmas taught us by our holy mother the Church. The Church teaches what God has revealed and her marks of unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity together with her authority and infallibility are a sufficient guarantee that the Church as the mouth-piece or representative of divine Wisdom and infinite Truth, cannot deceive us; but we are allowed to inquire further what other, if any, assurances the bountiful God has left to convince us that the teachings of the Catholic Church are truths revealed by God. If there are such arguments and evidences, they can not but affirm and strengthen our faith; and for those outside the Church,

[2] Sess. vi, can. 3. [3] 2 Cor. iii. 5.

they may be the means of convincing the well-disposed among them, that the claims of the Church to infallibility are well founded.

Which are those principal motives of credibility? We find seven: 1. Miracles. The miracles of Moses are well known and many of those of a later day among the Jewish people, the chosen people of God, are not less striking and evident; but above all the miracles of Christ and His Apostles, as well as those of the saints in the Church of God. attest that the Christian religion up to our day has not lost her divine character. Miracles undoubtedly are evidences of the sanctity and truthfulness of those who had the power to work them. God alone can suspend nature's laws and the servants of God who appealed to the truth of their mission by works contrary to the well-known physical laws, prove that they were the messengers of God. 2. Prophecies. Who but the all-knowing God can foresee events many years before they happen, when these events depend on the will of God or on the free will of rational creatures? The prophecies of Moses, of David and of the other prophets of the Old Testament, relating to the life of Our Lord, and the wonderful prophecies recorded in the New Testament undoubtedly prove that those to whom the secrets of the future were revealed, were God's friends and ambassadors. 3. A third motive of credibility appears in the holiness and sanctity of the Commandments imposed by the Christian law of grace and of the means prescribed for their observance, as well as in the effects produced on those who keep them faithfully. (a) As God is the source of all holiness, laws so holy in themselves must have God for Author. (b) The means which the Christian religion proposes for the observance of the Commandments, are the grace of God to be found in prayer and in the sacraments, essentially holy practices, and (c) those that faithfully keep the Commandments are sure to lead holy lives and to become eminent in sanctity. The exemplary life of one saint ought to be sufficient to conceive a sincere man that the Christian religion is divine in its origin. 4. For a fourth motive we may turn to the many Fathers and Doctors who have illustrated the Church by their eminent sanctity and profound erudition,

as their conviction of and enthusiasm for the truth of the Catholic faith increased in proportion to the depth of their learning. Contrast with this the vacillation of the authors of any other religion, who had no faith in the doctrines they advanced, and in spreading their erroneous doctrine, showed that they were moved more by worldly interests, envy or pride, than by the love of truth. 5. We find a fifth motive in the astounding rapidity with which the Christian religion was propagated all over the world. This motive will impress us the more when we consider the means employed and the obstacles to be overcome: God employed for the difficult task twelve poor fishermen, and in spite of the opposition on the part of the Pagan priests and of the civil rulers, who punished with the most cruel tortures the followers of the new religion, and above all in spite of the passions of an incredulous paganism, the Christian religion revolutionized the whole social order in a comparatively short space of time. 6. The constancy of the martyrs is another evidence of the truth of the Christian religion, for which they gave up their lives. Among them were young maidens, yea, children and old men and women, and the courage and joyful spirit, with which they bore the most cruel and prolonged tortures, cannot be explained, unless we attribute it to divine power; and what is more to be wondered at is, that the torments of the martyrs instead of frightening the beholders, brought many to embrace the faith for which the martyrs died. 7. Finally the seventh motive of credibility is found in the permanence of the Church in spite of all her powerful enemies, who have often sworn to annihilate her or to banish her from civilized nations. How many enemies from within and without have waged a relentless war against her! Empires and kingdoms have tottered and fallen since she was heralded to the world. Hundreds of new heresies have sprung up and only the memory of their errors remains. All human institutions rise and fall, but the Church, established on a solid rock, alone remains in all her splendor and youthful vigor; and why? No other reason can be assigned than the promise of the Son of God, which assured His followers that the gates of hell should not prevail against her.

Let us remark here that although each and every one of the seven motives of credibility is sufficient to establish the divine origin of the Christian faith, our belief does not rest on any or on all these motives. They may convince a judicious man that a religion with such marks of divine protection cannot be but true, and still, he may not have the saving faith. "The demons believe and tremble," says St. James,[4] or as St. Thomas has it: "The demons see the manifest proofs by which they understand that the doctrines of the Church come from God;"[5] and notwithstanding, their perverse will stubbornly refuses to subject itself to God, nor can they make an act of faith, for the will must also intervene. Belief is not true faith, unless the will commands the intellects to say: "I believe, not because the whole Christian religion is evidently God's work, but because God has revealed the truths of our religion;" and thus man's belief rests mainly on God's authority. It is not enough that we should be convinced of the divine origin of the Christian religion, but we should accept as truth whatever God has revealed because of His veracity and wisdom, and therefore deception on His part is impossible nor can He be deceived.

The motives of credibility alone are not sufficient to elicit from us an act of faith; for no matter how evident the truth may be, the wish to believe must be imparted by the intellect to the will, and the will being moved by the intellect, moves in its turn the intellect to give its perfect assent. That the intellect more than the will is instrumental in producing a genuine act of faith, may come from two causes: one is that the will is inclined and tends to what the intellect judges to be good, and the other rests upon the judgment of the intellect, which decides that credence is to be given to an enunciated article of faith, not on account of the intrinsic evidence of what is proposed to our belief, but because of some external proof: *e. g.,* a prophet of God may announce a future event, and give for proof the resurrection of a dead person. It is in the latter sense that the devils believe. The faithful may be influenced by external proofs to give their assent to the truth, but they are moved thereto by the grace of God, which shows them

[4] James ii. 19. [5] St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 5 a. 2.

that to believe what God teaches is infallibly true.[6] Even should we follow the opinion that the devils have faith, and that the damned have preserved the faith which they received in Baptism; that faith could not be praiseworthy nor profitable to them; because such faith is imposed on them by the evidence of external proofs and therefore their reluctance in giving their assent, does not diminish their hatred of God, but rather increases it. "Faith without good works is dead" and for the damned, faith that lacks hope and charity or the love of God, could but increase their wickedness, their fruitless despair and torturing regrets.

We must conclude from the doctrine herein laid down, that faith cannot exist in him who believes some articles of faith and rejects others; for faith rests on the authority of God and he that rejects His authority in one revealed truth, rejects the reason why all and every single article should be believed and to him the grace of God is always denied, for God cannot infuse a faith, by which one accepts one revealed truth to the exclusion of the others.

We sum up our remarks on the motives of credibility with the statement that they are proofs or evidences that the truths taught by the Church have been revealed by God; but the motives which determine us to believe are the wisdom and veracity of God who cannot deceive nor be deceived. St. Paul teaches this doctrine clearly when he says: "Therefore, we also give thanks to God without ceasing, because, when you had received of us the word of God, you received it not as the words of men, but (as it is indeed) the word of God, who worketh in you that have believed."[7] Hence, if we are asked why we believe that there is one God and three Persons in God, the correct answer would be: I believe it not because the Church teaches it or because the Apostles have taught it, but because God Himself has revealed it. Still the following answer of our Catechism is correct and explicit: "I believe the truth of our holy religion because God has revealed them and the Church proposes them for our belief."

The word of God, the motive of our faith, produces two effects: first, it makes our act of faith certain and in-

[6] *Cfr.* St. Thomas, *loc. cit.* [7] 1 Thess. ii. 13.

fallible, and secondly, it renders it highly meritorious; for by blindly obeying a God so wise and truthful, we honor Him as the infallible truth and we subject to Him the most noble faculties of our soul: our intellect and our will.

Faith may or may not be accompanied by charity; but faith without charity or the state of sanctifying grace is imperfect, for "Charity," says the Angelic Doctor, "completes and perfects the acts of the virtue." [8] Mortal sin takes away all the other virtues and gifts, except faith and hope, which cannot be lost except by acts contrary to those virtues, that is, by a mortal sin of infidelity or despair respectively.

We mean by a lively faith that faith which makes us practice what faith teaches, and when faith is such that believers fail to conform their actions to the will of God, it is said to be dead. [9] True faith worketh by charity, says the Apostle, [10] and St. Gregory explains the text when he tells us that "He believes truly who does what he believes;" [11] for then he portrays in his truly Christian life the sincerity of his faith.

II. Necessity and advantages of faith. 1. Faith is necessary unto salvation. This fundamental doctrine has always been accepted in the Church of God and is clearly taught in Holy Scripture, in the Old as well as in the New Testament. Our Lord Himself has proclaimed the absolute necessity of faith unto salvation, for, when He sent his Apostles to preach the Gospel to every creature, He added: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be condemned." [12] "Without faith," says St. Paul, "it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to God, must believe that He is and is the rewarder of them that seek Him." [13] By these texts we are taught to believe not only that God is what He is, *i. e.*, His essence and infinite perfections and all that He has revealed of His nature, but also that He rewards the virtue of faith and chastises infidelity and that for all eternity.

2. Faith is most useful even for the present life and adds to our happiness on earth, as it supports us in the

[8] St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 4 a. 3. [9] James ii. 20. [10] Gal. v. 6.
[11] Hom. xxix. in Evang. [12] Mark xvi. 16. [13] Heb. xi. 6.

trials and difficulities that fall to our lot. Of what an inestimable price is faith to the multitude of the poor or ill-paid toilers, of the cruelly oppressed, of the sick and dying! What peace and consolation it procures us in all our tribulations! Do you wish to find not only consolation but even joy and contentment in suffering? Prepare yourselves with the armor of faith and if your misfortunes be as great as the tribulations of the holy man Job, and you have faith, you will find peace and happiness in the midst of your sufferings. If faith has brought forth countless martyrs to the bosom of the Church for her greater glory, faith has also begotten innumerable sons and daughters as imitators of the Savior, because they longed to prove themselves worthy of the crucified Jesus and were martyrs in desire if not in deed.

Nothing can be wanting to the strong in faith; it consoles the sorrowful, encourages the timid and depressed, fortifies and strengthens the weak; it brings God to them and what more can they desire? Oh! how they are to be pitied who in this valley of tears, live and die without faith!

3. Although the temporal advantages of faith are not to be despised, every one can readily understand that faith, by its very nature, tends mainly to the spiritual advantage of true believers. Faith is that kindly light that illuminates and guides man's intellect, and keeps him from deviating from the path of virtue and holiness. It reveals to him the secrets of heaven. It teaches him his destiny here and hereafter, and the means to attain it, as well as the falsity of what the world prizes most, and the all imperious duty of accumulating riches for the future life.

Faith together with Baptism or its desire, remits sin and raises all man's good work as well as his most ordinary occupations to the supernatural order. Without faith there is no remission of sin nor true greatness or dignity in man, whilst a lively faith conducts man to the highest degree of perfection and he merits for himself daily an increase of glory.

How unhappy the man who is devoid of faith! He labors to amass perishable goods, and, if by his natural intellect and will he surpasses the brute creation, by misusing and

abusing his noble qualities, he descends below irrational creatures.

By faith we are incorporated in the mystical body of Christ and thus we become children of God, co-heirs of our Savior and heirs of heaven, as well as temples of the Holy Ghost, and thus the soul of the true believer becomes the favorite palace in which the Blessed Trinity loves to dwell.

"My just man liveth by faith," [14] says St. Paul, for by it a man begins to live the life of grace and if he persevere in the faith and be guided by it in all his undertakings, he lays up for himself immense and imperishable treasures, which robbers cannot steal, which moth cannot devour nor rust destroy.

All these blessings we have enumerated, belong only by right to the man with a lively faith and not to them who deny their faith by their ill-regulated and sinful lives. Furthermore a Christian should possess the spirit of faith, if he desires, to secure all the spiritual benefits attached to it, and by this we mean that faith should enter into all his thoughts, words and actions and that it should inspire, animate and constantly direct him. Without this spirit of faith man acts without proper motives, like a machine, or in obedience to his sensual appetites, like the brute, or at best, he follows the vagaries of his mind, being disposed to adopt all that flatters his pride or suits his fancy or all that conforms to his natural inclinations, like Pagan philosophers. But if a man act by faith, he seeks in all things to please his Maker and to gather merits for heaven. All the rest is vanity. With the spirit of faith all our relations with God and neighbor are elevated and truly noble, for faith injects into them a spiritual and supernatural character. Without it man seeks himself and his material advantage in all his works, but with it man seeks God in all his occupations, whether manual or intellectual, and in all that he thinks, says or does. Nothing is lost; for he steadily grows in fervor and piety towards God and in charity towards his neighbor: he is disinterested in all his projects, forgetful of himself and of all selfish and worldly interests, and solely aims to conform himself and all his actions to the holy will

[14] Heb. x. 38.

of God. A man imbued with that spirit of faith, follows the road which the saints have trodden and is on the safe way to perfection.

From the foregoing explanations we conclude that faith is the foundation of our hope and charity, and of our entire supernatural life; and if one should object that in speaking of the moral virtues, we have made humility the foundation of all virtues and of spiritual life itself, we answer with St. Thomas: "As we compare all the virtues together to an edifice, we also compare the first virtue we acquire to the foundation, by which the construction of the edifice is begun. God is the Author of every virtue; now, the first virtue to be acquired may be taken in two ways: either it regards the obstacles to be removed and in that sense humility holds the first place, because it chases away pride which God resists; or it regards the positive acts of virtue by which we approach God; now, the first step towards God is taken by faith, as the Apostle writes to the Hebrews:[15] "He that cometh to God must believe," *i. e.,* must begin by believing. In this latter sense faith is the foundation and in a more perfect manner than humility."[16] St. Augustine likewise says that: "The house of God is founded by faith, constructed by hope and completed and perfected by charity."[17] Therefore, although faith is far inferior to charity, for "There remain faith, hope and charity, these three, but the greatest of them is charity," nevertheless charity cannot exist without faith, and as the greatest monuments, due to the inventive genius of the most famous architects, need the most solid foundations, likewise the most eminent sanctity must be founded on the most lively faith, without which the most exalted holiness would crumble to the ground at the first shock, which breaks loose through human passions and the combined efforts of the demons of hell. Faith engenders confidence and hope in God's goodness. Hope begets courage and fortitude, humility makes God our ally in vanquishing the wicked enemies of our salvation, whilst charity based on faith and hope, makes man direct all his attention to please his God.

[15] Heb. xi. 6. [16] St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 151 a. 5 to 2.

[17] Serm xx. *de Verbis Apost.*

III. Now we ask ourselves with St. James: "What shall it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? Shall faith be able to save him?" [18] The Apostle St. James answers the query by giving six examples, like so many reasons why faith alone cannot save us: (a) in verse 16, he argues that as the poor are not clothed by words but by alms, therefore the nakedness of the soul is not clad by faith only, but needs the practice of good works. (b) In verse 17, he says that faith without charity is like a body without a soul: it is a corpse and therefore faith without good works is said to be dead. (c) In verse 18, faith is said to consist in good works, and if good works are absent it is invisible and useless to any one. (d) In verse 19, he shows that faith without good works is the faith of the demons: they believe and tremble. (e) In verse 21, the same Apostle maintains that Abraham was justified by his faith, but not by faith alone; for he offered his son as a sacrifice in proof of his unshaken faith. Now Abraham is the father of all believers and therefore his faith is the norm and rule of all those who wish to be justified and to be saved. (f) Finally in verse 25, St. James proves by a last argument from Scripture that faith alone can not save any one, and he cites the case of Rahab, [19] who was saved by good works, for she was rewarded for the reception and protection he accorded to the explorers sent by Josue.[20] St. Gregory seems to have anticipated the false doctrine of Luther and Calvin, who taught that faith alone is necessary unto salvation. Let us see how he refutes the heresy: "Perhaps," says St. Gregory, "some one may say within himself: I believe, and therefore I shall be saved. He speaks the truth, if his work correspond to his faith. True faith consist in this that one does not contradict by his morals what he says in his speech. Therefore it is that St. Paul speaks of some false faithful who confess to know God, but deny Him by their deeds. Therefore St. John says: He who says that he knows God but does not observe His commandments, is a liar. This being so, we must recognize the truth of our faith by the study of our lives. We are then truly faithful if we fulfill by our deeds what we promise by

[18] James ii. 14. [19] Jos. ii. 10. [20] *Cfr.* A Lapide.

our words." [21] Good works with faith must secure our eternal happiness; and therefore St. Peter begins his second epistle by exhorting the faithful to join all other virtues to their faith, and ends his epistle by saying: "Wherefore, brethren, labor the more that by good works you may make sure your calling and election," *i. e.,* your salvation. [22]

IV. Faith as a theological virtue has certain qualities which are indispensable to its perfection, and first of all comes simplicity, *i. e.,* the simplicity of a child which makes us accept the truth of our holy religion without curiously scrutinizing the truth itself before giving our assent. Faith is essentially an inclination to believe inspired and prompted by God, and when we have the conviction that God has spoken, it does not behoove us to examine a particular doctrine, as to its plausibility or reasonableness. The only question we can ask ourselves is: Did God reveal such a doctrine, and if our mind and conscience answer in the affirmative, the revealed truth must be accepted, whether it is or not above our comprehension. This is clearly the doctrine of the Church, founded on the teachings of Holy Scripture. "It is not the penetration of the intellect," writes St. Augustine against the Manicheans, "but the simplicity of the faith which gives to the masses of the faithful a perfect security." [23] The reason of this simplicity of our faith is clearly deduced from what we said regarding the merit of our faith. If our faith is based on human proofs, derived from experience, or the depth and penetration of our intellect determine us to believe, on what rests our merit? To subject our intellect and will to God is meritorious, but when we are induced or constrained thereto by the evidence of things, our faith has no more merit than that of the demons, who believe and tremble. "Faith," says St. Gregory, "is not meritorious, if it be based on proofs furnished by human reason." [24]

We have spoken of the faith of Abraham in regard to the good works that must accompany a lively faith; but let us look at the simplicity of his faith. God promised him a son and he believed, although he and Sara, his wife, were

[21] Hom. xxix. in *Evang.*
[22] 2 Peter i. 10.
[23] Ep. c. 4.
[24] Hom. xxvi. in *Evang.*

far advanced in age; when he was called upon to immolate his only son, notwithstanding that he had been promised a numerous posterity, he hesitated not, but was ready to sacrifice his son without inquiring how God's promise could be fulfilled, in spite of the fact that he was asked to prevent by the sacrifice the accomplishment of the promise God had made him.[25] Likewise the Blessed Virgin, when the Angel Gabriel announced to her that she had been chosen to be the Mother of the Messiah, inquired of the angel how it could be done, as she knew not man, for the fear of losing her virginity troubled her; but being assured on that point, without understanding God's designs upon her, she answered the angel in simplicity of mind and heart: "Be it done unto me according thy word." Zachary on the other hand was struck dumb, because he did not believe the angel announcing to him the birth of a son.[26]

2. The second quality of faith is that it should be firm, that is, without hesitation or doubt. This firmness is a natural consequence of the simplicity of our faith; for if we believe without examining how a doctrine of revelation is possible or even reasonable, we base entirely our faith on the word of God. Now nothing can be more certain than God's word; for it reposes on His infinite wisdom and veracity. An old man, conscious of his failing strength and general weakness, whilst walking over a rough road, leans on a stout cane to support him; if his sight is becoming feeble, he makes use of some one to guide him or to give him a helping hand, and if any one has to walk in darkness, he relies upon the strong light which shows him the road; likewise in our weakness of intellect we lean upon God, who indicates and lightens the path and preserves us from error. It is to this that St. Peter refers, when speaking of faith, he says that it is like a light shining in a dark place.[27]

3. A third quality of faith is fortitude, which gives the man of faith the courage rather to suffer all imaginable evils than to forsake the faith or to deny it in word or deed, or to forsake the practices based on faith and taught by it. This

[25] Gen. xv. 45-17; vi. 15, 16. *Cfr.* Rom. iv. 16 *seq.*

[26] Luke i. 13-22. [27] 2 Peter i. 19.

quality is but a consequence of a firm faith, which remains unshaken under the most difficult trials. The first effect of this firm faith is to resist the temptations of Satan, who like a roaring lion seeks whom he may devour. Him we must resist strong in faith.[28] This bold and courageous faith was universal in the first centuries of the Christian era. The early Christians knew how to suffer the loss of fortune, outrageous persecutions and death itself, rather than to deny their faith. Those that suffered death for their faith during the ten persecutions under the Roman emperors, and especially during the last, which began with Diocletian and ended only ten years later, may be said to be innumerable. The acts of the martyrs, which have partly come down to us, show that no age or quality nor sex was spared. Lactantius,[29] who wrote only to prove that most of the persecutors of the Christians had a miserable and tragic end, lets us infer that countless Christian suffered death, some by being burned alive, others were exposed to wild and ferocious animals, others again were drowned or perished by hunger or the sword.

Although the Church is not always persecuted, still there are many occasions during our lives when a lively faith becomes necessary to encourage us in the practice of our holy religion, or to overcome the obstacles to a pure and Christian life; and therefore, being conscious of the truth that when faith is lost all other virtues are lost, and that without it we cannot gain favor with God, we should strive to enliven our faith by frequent acts of the virtue and by keeping constantly in mind the duties which our faith imposes.

If faith is so indispensable to the Christian that St. John Chrysostom has taught us that it is the origin of justice, the beginning of holiness, the principle of devotion and the foundation of religion, and that without it no man may hope to be united to God or to reach the summit of perfection,[30] it behooves us continually to strive to possess a lively faith, that through it together with the consoling virtue of hope, we may arrive at the practice of perfect charity, which

[28] 1 Peter v. 9. [29] Died 325 in Treves.

[30] Serm. on faith, hope and charity.

unites us closely and intimately to God, according to the prayer of our beloved Savior: "Not for these (the Apostles) only do I pray, but for those also who through their word shall believe in Me; that they all may be one as Thou, Father, in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us and that (from this perfect unity) the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." [31] Indeed, this unity of faith and sentiment cannot fail to impress all sincere people with the truth of the Christian religion.

V. Means by which a lively faith is acquired, preserved and perfected.

1. The first means to acquire a lively faith is found in the all-powerful prayer. Faith is a gift of God which we cannot deserve: the grace of God is not only necessary to the beginning of faith, but God's help must aid us in all the stages of it. We may merit new graces by corresponding with the first grace; but even in this divine help is required that our intellect may be enlightened and our will may be piously disposed to give its firm and perfect assent to all revealed truth. This truth becomes still more evident when we consider the four gifts we stand in need of, to acquire a perfect faith; they are: wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and counsel, all supernatural gifts of the Holy Ghost, and they may be considered as four different spirits, due to His inspiration; [32] for to be moved to what is good, we must first be disposed and prepare ourselves to receive the mover's impulse. As the motion is supernatural, we must before all be disposed to the supernatural, in the same way that he who wishes to attend the lectures in a university must have acquired sufficient learning. With the impulse of grace our ears are opened and disposed to listen [33] to the voice of our Master. And this distinguishes, according to the Angelic Doctor, the gifts of the Holy Ghost from all other virtues. [34]

The gift of counsel disposes the mind to avoid the dangers of faith and to act in conformity to it; knowledge is the gift or quality to judge properly the things of this world, in so far as they may contribute to the increase of faith; understanding is a gift which enlightens our mind

[31] John xvii. 20, 21. [32] Isaias xi. 2.

[33] Isaias l. 4. [34] St. Thomas, 1, 2, q. 68 a. 1, 5.

to a comprehension of the mysteries proposed to our belief, and wisdom is the gift which disposes the mind and heart to believe firmly and with joy, and to find in faith itself and its unction the power to direct our thoughts and actions toward God, the Source of all truth, and the more deserving of our service, the more He is unintelligible to our weak nature.

We should then frequently say with the Apostles to Our Lord: "Increase our faith;" [35] or with the father who was asked by the Savior if he believed, answered, "Crying out with tears, I do believe, Lord; help my unbelief." [36]

2. A second means consists in making frequent acts of faith, for we increase our faith by believing, like an artist improves by practicing his art. So it is with the virtues as well as with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and the efficacy of this exercise of faith is especially applicable to the mysteries that surpass all our understanding. This becomes the more evident, the more we study the motives of credibility, for when we become thoroughly convinced that all the truth of the Catholic religion which are taught us by the Church, have been revealed by God, how inconsistent and wicked would it be to doubt the wisdom and veracity of an all-knowing, all-holy God! Lovers of the world and especially they who refuse to adopt the means to subdue their passions, often excuse their unbelief and their indifference to revealed truth, because it is degrading to a rational being to be forced to believe what it cannot fully comprehend; but the saints, and among them St. Teresa, found precisely in the mysteries a foundation and reason for their firm faith; for St. Teresa said: Those mysteries remind me of God, whose infinite perfections we shall never fully comprehend. Oh! insatiable pride of man! Oh, the depth of his pretensions! He cannot understand himself nor his nature, and notwithstanding that, he wants to bring down his Creator to the level of his weak intellect."

Because of the fact that faith increases in us by believing, as hope by trusting God, and charity by loving Him, a practice that should never be forgotten is to recite every day, morning and evening at least, the act of faith or the

[35] Luke xvii. 5. [36] Mark ix. 23.

Apostles' Creed, and frequently repeat as an ejaculatory prayer: I believe but Thou, O Lord, help my incredulity.

3. A third means consists in the practice of good works. Faith languishes and is finally lost altogether through the neglect of living in accordance with our faith, as we have noted already; and on the other hand, faith is increased and quickened by every good action done for the love of God; for charity being increased by the infusion of a more abundant sanctifying grace, merited by virtuous deeds, the increase of grace augments all the virtues in the soul, so that acts of faith directly enliven our faith and good works quicken and strengthen it, but indirectly through sanctifying grace. Faith, it is true, is not necessarily lost because of the lack of good works and not even by a sinful life, but such faith necessarily languishes and is useless as well as worthless, so that it is called dead. And why is it so called if not because without good works faith ceases to be fit for the supernatural life and meritorious for heaven, and it is also inadequate to aid the Christian in striving towards perfection; whilst good works aided by a firm faith strengthen and fortify the soul and aid it to advance rapidly in the road to sanctity. Charity is the perfection of our faith, and charity demands a scrupulous accomplishment of all our obligations and the practice of the good works which the love of God and of our neighbor suggests.

4. As a practical suggestion, let us add that faith should be constantly our light and guide. There are two principles, which lie at the foundation of religion and morality: they are the source of all our duties and responsibilities. The first is that we have been created by God to love and serve Him upon earth, and by this means to merit our eternal destiny after this life; and the second is that we forfeited this destiny through Adam's disobedience, but were restored back to more abundant privileges through the merits of the Redeemer. If God made us, we belong to God, not physically but morally, because He endowed us with free will and free physical action that the natural law, which flows from the relationship between the creature and its Creator might be strictly observed; but by far the most important is the second truth arising from the loss of God's friend-

ship and the restoration of mankind to the kinship of God, through the merits of His Son, who delivered us by the sacrifice of His life from the slavery of Satan and gained for us not only the title, but all the rights and privileges of children of God, as heirs, and co-heirs with His Son Jesus Christ. If we view justice only, God could have made us His slaves with no other claim even to ordinary friendship. Now, because of our redemption, we, as adopted sons and daughters of the eternal Father through Christ, owe Him veneration, love and obedience; but, on the other hand, it behooves us to look upon ourselves as real slaves, especially so, if we have ever forfeited our inheritance as children, by wilful disobedience and base ingratitude.

From the foregoing principles we conclude that we should seek in all we think, say or do, the glory of God and the sanctification of the most ordinary occupations of our lives; for "This is the will of God, the sanctification of your souls;" "Be ye holy as I and My Father in heaven are holy," and as practical holiness consists in the imitation of Christ, we should often ask ourselves what Jesus, our Model, would have done in this or that circumstance, what would Jesus Christ, if He were now in my place, think of, what would He say, what would He do and how should He do it? Our faith gives us the answer to such and similar questions, and our duty is to execute promptly what the light of faith discloses to our reason. How much time we lose daily, because we act on the spur of the moment without consulting our reason animated and informed by faith!

If "The just man liveth by faith," [87] his whole life must be quickened by it and that sacred and supernatural life must be constantly invoked to enlighten and direct all his interior and exterior efforts, so that all that he thinks, says, or does may be stamped with the seal of the supernatural. An adopted child of God ought not only to shun the life of the brute, which consists in satisfying its animal passions, neither should he be content with following the light of his natural reason, however ennobling and praiseworthy it may be in the eyes of the learned and educated, like the Pagan philosophers; but he should be satisfied with

[87] Heb. x. 38.

nothing else than with the divine faith, the light that comes to us through revelation and is exemplified in the life of the Savior, who could truly say of Himself: "I am the life, the way and the truth." This must be borne in mind irrespective of our own welfare, although we may have also in view the great reward attached to the least of our actions, if it be performed with the spirit of faith and in imitation of the Divine Model. Our own interests are at stake: to live like the brute by following the instinct of our animal nature, deserves reproof, severe condemnation and not a less punishment than the one implied in the dreadful sentence: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." If one acts, moved thereto by the natural light of reason alone, his act is devoid of supernatural merit, and if a whole life is thus spent, although free from grievous faults through invincible ignorance, the soul presents itself empty-handed before the Judge and condemnation must also follow; therefore there remains but one thing to do, if we have the welfare of our souls at heart, and that is to live like the just man by faith.

If we apply the above principles to our prayers, to our devotions, to the sacraments we receive, especially to those of frequent use, like the sacraments of Penance and of the Holy Eucharist; if we remember at all times the presence of God and how much He is pleased with our ordinary duties and other occupations, although indifferent in themselves, provided they be performed in a spirit of faith, solely to please Him, what rapid strides we shall make in the way of perfection!

There are other circumstances in which the spirit of faith is indispensable to live the life of a just man, and among them we should not forget those of adversity and tribulation. How the man without faith is to be pitied, when great misfortunes and calamities overwhelm him! How many have wickedly sought in death an end to their moral or physical sufferings, when a little Christian resignation born of faith, might have saved them! How many have ended in despair when a glance at the crucifix would have given them courage to bear their trials patiently and even joyfully. Was there ever a man so afflicted as Job, so over-

whelmed by ingratitude as David, so persecuted as the Maccabees, as the Apostles and the early faithful followers of the suffering Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, whose soul was sorrowful even unto death and who was abandoned without consolation by a loving Father when He hung bleeding on the Cross? and among all His sufferings not a word of complaint escaped His lips. Who on earth, except the Savior, equalled in patience and resignation the sorrowful Mother of Jesus? She is the model of suffering mothers, as Jesus is the Model of thousands of martyrs and saints, who, like St. Paul and the other Apostles, rejoiced because they had been found worthy to suffer for His sake.

Without entering into details, the teachings of revelation are sufficient not only to induce us willingly to accept all kinds of tribulations that may befall a sufferer on earth, but they even stimulate and move us to endure them with joy: faith teaches us that the present life is one of suffering, since we live in a valley of tears; it is but an exile and a preparation for our entrance into a happier home; and therefore sorrows should be accepted as trials, for "The furnace tries the potter's vessels and the trial of affliction the just man," [38] or as a temporal punishment due to our sins that would retard our happiness after death: "You shall be made sorrowful but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." [39] Patience in tribulations merits an increase of happiness in our future home; for "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience trial, and trial hope, and hope confoundeth not," [40] and the acceptance of a penance may bring mercy for the sinner to lead him to repentance, and finally, those most dear to Our Lord Jesus Christ have had the greatest share of sufferings, witness: Job, David, the Blessed Virgin, the Apostles, the martyrs of the early Church and the greatest saints of all times. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." [41]

VI. Temptations against faith.

Not only the wicked in the world, but even holy souls, who really and truly desire to advance towards perfection, are sometimes assailed by great temptations against faith, and for their guidance and consolation we add a few sug-

[38] Eccli. xxvii. 6. [39] John xvi. 20. [40] Rom. v. 3. [41] Matt. v. 5.

gestions. A temptation against faith does not denote a weakness of that fundamental virtue; for the oftener pious souls are assailed by the wicked enemy of their salvation, the firmer their faith, provided their resistance be resolute and determined. Those temptations may be considered as trials, which the good Lord permits to test their fidelity.

1. Let us first observe that penitents should, when they go to confession after having been assailed by violent temptations against faith, examine themselves whether they have not wilfuly and attentively considered the temptations, as if to ascertain how much truth there was in the objection of the devil to an article of their belief, and whether meanwhile they suspended their judgment regarding their belief in the revealed truth. If one or the other happened they should confess it, even if they think that they did not fully give way to the temptation; but if, on the contrary, they rejected the temptation and made an act of faith, or simply banished it from their mind, their action was praiseworthy and it need not trouble them in the least.

2. How should we conduct ourselves in a temptation against revealed truth? It is usually advisable simply to ignore it and banish it; but if the temptation returns and continues to assail any one, he may make an act of faith in general, without stopping to advert to the particular truth which was the object of the temptation. This is for the purpose of avoiding the recurrence of the temptation.

3. The temptations most to be dreaded by holy souls are those originating from aridity against the mercy and goodness of God. Sometimes we find pious souls who consider themselves abandoned by God and therefore have grave fear of their salvation. In such extreme cases those pious souls should not abandon any of their ordinary devotions, but feel resigned to await the good pleasure of God to remove the aridity in due time; they should never lose faith and confidence in the God of all goodness and mercy, "Who desires not the death of the wicked but that the wicked turn from his way and live." [42] Let them be reminded that Job was not only tempted to mistrust God's goodness by Satan, but even by his friends, and above all, that our Savior was also

[42] Ezech. xxxiii. 11.

subjected to the most fearful aridity during His agony in the garden of Gethsemani and when hanging on the Cross, He exclaimed: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" All such temptations will promptly vanish before that heroic resignation so well expressed in the Savior's prayer in the garden when He exclaimed, addressing His Father: "Not as I will but as Thou wilt."

ARTICLE II

Hope

I. In What the Divine Virtue of Hope Consists—Hope and Desire—II. The Object of Hope—1. Man's Heart Can Be Satiated Only By the Possession of the Infinite Good, God Himself—Scriptural Proofs—2. The Secondary Object of Hope Consists in the Means by Which Man Can Arrive at His Destiny: (a) Some of These Are Absolutely Necessary, and (b) Others Are Very Useful. (c) Of Temporal Goods There Are Three Kinds: Some Are Commonly a Detriment to Our Eternal Welfare, Some Are Indifferent and Some Are Called Temporal; for They Are Spiritual of Their Nature—III. Motives That Should Induce Us to Hope in God: God's Omnipotence and Fidelity to His promises; His Infinite Perfections as well as the Infinite Merits of Jesus Christ—IV. Hope Should Be Firm—(A) It mainly Rests on the Fidelity of an Omnipotent and Infinitely Good God—Firm Hope Excludes All Distrust—Confidence in God in Temptations—1. We Cannot Rely on Ourselves—2. Much Less on Others—3. By Relying on Ourselves Without Good Works, We Fall Into Presumption, a Grave Danger to Our Salvation—(B) Hope Must Be Certain and Constant as well as Firm—Immutability of God—We Are Members of Christ's Mystical Body—We Cannot Perish Unless We Will—(C) Fear of God's Justice and Distrust of Ourselves Should Nevertheless Accompany Our Firm Hope—Despair—V. Effects of Hope—1. It Rejoices Man's Heart and Fortifies it Against Future Trials—2. It Brings Consolation in Trials and Tribulations—3. Through it we Patiently Endure all the Evils of this Miserable Life.

I. Hope, considered as a divine virtue, inclines us to trust that God will give us eternal life and the means to obtain it. It is divine, for its source is in God and of its nature it is supernatural and cannot be acquired like the natural intellectual and moral virtues; it is also a theological virtue, because it has God for direct object, as we have explained in the introduction to the three divine virtues of faith, hope and charity. Why do we trust in God? Because God has destined us to eternal life and has furthermore promised us the necessary means such as grace, prayer, the

sacraments, the guidance and the practices of the Church to reach our destiny.

Desire and hope are affections of the soul very similar to each other, because both have for object the acquisition of what is good, and both require that the good can be attained; for no one desires or hopes what is beyond his reach; but they differ in that hope supposes some difficulty in reaching the desired object. "Hope," says St. Thomas, "supposes besides the desire, a certain effort and a certain elevation of the soul to obtain a good that is difficult to be acquired." [1] This difficulty becomes evident, if we bear in mind that the sight of God in heaven, which is promised us, is supernatural, that it surpasses all our comprehension even after it is taught us by revelation, and that we cannot make an act of hope without a special actual grace from God. "No one," says St. Bernard, "can by himself cry out: Lord! Thou art my hope, unless he be inspired thereto by the Holy Ghost." [2]

II. What are the objects of our hope? 1. The primary and ultimate object of our hope cannot be other than God Himself, who has placed in our souls the insatiable desire of a good that alone can fill the void in our heart and fully satisfy it. Is it possible that the God of all goodness should bestow upon man a natural craving that can never be realized? In this world nothing can satiate the heart of man, neither riches, nor honors, nor pleasures. When one desired good has been attained, the heart cries aloud: more, more. There is always something wanting. Of this we find several examples in Holy Scripture: Aman was the first in the court of Assuerus and he was sad and afflicted, because there was one Mardochai who refused to salute him. [3] Solomon, the wisest and the most honored of men, after having enjoyed all that the world prizes most, was forced to exclaim: "Vanity of vanities and all is vanity....I have seen all things that are done under the sun, and behold all is vanity and vexation of the spirit." [4] The wise monarch tried wisdom, wealth, pleasures and honors to satisfy the cravings of his heart, but found in all but vexation and

[1] St. Thomas, 1. 2. q. 25 a. 12.
[2] In Ps. cxxx.
[3] Esther v. 13.
[4] Eccles. i. 2, 14.

vanity.[5] As nothing here on earth can satisfy the ever increasing desires of man's heart, the Infinite alone can satiate it, and therefore the infinite God can be the only adequate object of man's desire for happiness.

It is thus useless to expect perfect happiness in this world. Those nearest to the goal are they who are satisfied with their condition, serve God with fidelity and in that manner enjoy in anticipation, with full confidence in God's promises, the possession of the Sovereign Good, which will in the near future satisfy all their desires.

2. The secondary object of our hope comprises all the supernatural means necessary or useful to the acquisition of eternal happiness after this life. The necessary means to reach our destiny are sanctifying grace for all, and for those who have the use of reason, actual graces, the forgiveness of sins, the Church and the belief in all revealed truths, the observance of the commandments of God and of the Church, the sacraments, prayer, the virtues necessary for perfect compliance with the duties of one's state of life and all other helps from God to preserve purity of conscience and to persevere in grace.

The means which are not strictly necessary, but are very useful to insure a union with God in heaven or to increase our happiness, are the observance of the evangelical counsels, a constant striving after perfection, fasts and other mortifications, which are not enjoined by precept, and perfect conformity in all things to the will of God.

3. As to the temporal goods of this life, they are of three kinds: some are commonly an obstacle to our advancement towards perfection; such as riches, pleasures, honors and praises and to these we should be indifferent and desire or accept them only in so far as we can use them without detriment to our eternal welfare. Some may be very useful if properly employed; such as health, learning, a long life, influence over others, especially over the powerful and rich, success in our undertakings, etc., and these we may desire and even ask of God in conformity to His holy will; and finally some are improperly called temporal goods, since they are spiritual of their nature, and necessary to our eternal

[5] *Ibid.*, ii.

happiness: these are mentioned in the last petitions of the Our Father, of which the three first petitions regard eternal life and the four last are only called temporal, because they are given us in this life to acquire the everlasting joys of heaven. In that sense we not only can, but must ask them of God, that is, that God may give us our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us, and that we may not be led into temptation, but that He may graciously deliver us from all evil; because these four petitions taken in a broad sense contain all the necessarily means to arrive at our destiny.

In conclusion we must say that, since we do not know whether the strictly temporal goods of this world will be useful or detrimental to our eternal welfare, we should ask them only in so far as they may help us to obtain the destiny for which God has created us, and it is still more perfect to remain indifferent to all perishable or transitory things of this world, such as riches or poverty, health or sickness, a long life or a premature death.

III. As we have already stated, our hope of reaching our eternal destiny and of obtaining the means thereto, rests upon God's omnipotence and His fidelity to His promises. Did God promise the everlasting joys of heaven to them who continue in His service during life? Our Savior Himself will give us the answer. St. Mark after having stated that Jesus sent His Apostles to preach the Gospel to every creature, says that He added: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." [6] "He who shall persevere," the Savior says again, "to the end, shall be saved." [7] It is to save us that the Son of God became man, that He preached His heavenly doctrine and that He suffered and died; for "Christ died for all." [8] God wills our salvation and to those who might despair of being able to fulfill all that is required to obtain eternal life, He assures His help and abundant means of salvation, provided they ask Him: "And I say to you, ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, shall be opened." [9] Our Savior's promises

[6] Mark xvi. 16. [7] Matt. x. 22. [8] 2 Cor. v. 18. [9] Luke xi. 9.

should fully convince us that, since God promised us eternal life and the necessary means thereto, our hope in the fidelity of His promises cannot fail; for faith has made known to us His omnipotence and fidelity to His promises, two attributes essential to an all-perfect Being. "Our God is in heaven," says the Psalmist, "He hath made all He hath willed," [10] and as to His fidelity we find the assurance of it in the words of the Savior himself: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words will not pass away." [11]

There are other motives for our hope to be found in God's perfections, and they are deduced from His goodness and mercy as well as from the merits of the Savior. The mercy and goodness of God are everywhere proclaimed in Holy Scripture: mercy for the sinner and bounty for all. It seems as if God by His very nature were inclined to make us participate in His riches, in all that He is and in all that He has; yea, it seems the characteristic of Infinite Goodness that it communicate Itself to others as much as Its wisdom and justice may permit. Therefore He demands of us also that we be merciful and benevolent towards our neighbor. David is never tired of extolling God's mercy in many of his psalms. What consolation for us to be children of a Father so bountiful and forgiving and what greater motive can we have to trust Him and to confide in His promises!

The greatest work of the bounty and mercy of our God affords us another reason firmly to trust Him; for it surpasses in goodness all the works of His hands, and it will forever remain for us a mystery of the condescension and love of the Creator for His guilty creatures. I allude to the Incarnation of His divine Son, "He who hath not spared His only Son but delivered Him up for us," [12] can not but win our happiness, and if sometimes He takes up the rod to chastise us, He can have no other end in view than our ultimate good, as He seeks by many ways to apply to us the merits of His divine Son, which He has attached to the sacraments, to prayer and other observances, which His Spouse the Church in her ministrations bestows so abundantly upon us. Lastly the justice of God assures us

[10] Ps. cxiii. 3. [11] Matt. xxiv. 35. [12] Rom. viii. 32.

a reward proportionate to our services. This should encourage us not to let an opportunity pass by, without striving to increase our merit before our Maker. To many of us may be applied the words of the husbandman: "Why stand you here all the day idle? Go you also into My vineyard." [13]

Can we wonder now why the good God is called our hope by David? "Lord! Thou art my hope from my youth," [14] and again: "Thou has directed me because Thou hast become my hope," and by Jeremiah: "Thou art my hope in the day of affliction;" and St. Paul calls the Son of God "Christ Jesus our hope." [15]

IV. What kind of hope is expected of a Christian? Like faith, hope should be firm, because if faith rests on the wisdom and veracity of God, hope rests on His fidelity to His promises, as well as on His omnipotence to do what He wills. "Our God is in heaven," says the Psalmist, "He has done all things whatsoever He willed." [16] Man may promise and although conscientiously faithful to his promises, He is not always able to execute what he has intended and promised to do. We are told that the Emperor Charles V, who was visiting a trusted friend and great favorite on his death-bed, in an excess of affection promised him anything he might ask. The favorite replied: My Lord, I desire that Thou prolong my life by one hour. Alas, my friend, sighed the emperor, this is not in my power. Only a smile from the dying man greeted the emperor's words: he spoke no more.

Our hope to be firm should have no note of distrust. We may have doubts about our salvation: yea, we must work out our salvation in fear and trembling, [17] not because of any distrust of God, for although "It is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish according to His good will," [18] no matter how great the obstacles to your salvation may be, and how dangerous the temptations may appear that assail you from within and without, "God is faithful who will strengthen and keep you from evil," [19] provided you earnestly desire it and pray for it. The Apostle gives again

[13] Matt. xx. 6. [14] Ps. lxx. 5. [15] 1 Tim. i. 1. [16] Ps. cxiii. 31.
[17] Phil. ii. 12. [18] *Ibid.*, xiii. [19] 2 Thess. iii. 3.

the same assurance of God's fidelity, when he says: "God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able; but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it." [20] If God is thus faithful, should we not rely on Him in all dangers to our salvation whatever may be their source? We may say more and we emphasize the assertion, we cannot rely on any one else than on God.

(a) We cannot rely upon ourselves, for without God we can do nothing. "Without Me, you can do nothing," says Our Lord; [12] and how could we? Is Our Lord not the vine and we the branches? Does not our whole spiritual life come from Him? Is He not the head of that mystical body, to which we belong as members? And does not every member derive the spiritual life that is in him, from Jesus who merited that we might partake of His life? Let us hear Jesus Himself: "I am the vine; you the branches: he that abideth in Me and I in Him, the same beareth much fruit; but without Me you can do nothing." [22] We cannot even raise our hearts to God nor call upon Him with faith and hope without His help, and much less can we address Him by the endearing name of Father with affection and love, for "God hath sent the spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying: Abba, Father." [23] Why, because as St. Paul explains it again in another place, we must first be made sons of God and possess the spirit and sentiments of sons: "You have received," He says, "the spirit of sons of adoption, whereby we cry: Abba (Father)." [24]

(b) If we cannot rely on ourselves can we rely on others? We answer with St. Thomas: [25] "It is not allowed to hope in man or in any other creature as the primary and efficient cause of our happiness; but it is permissible to hope in a man or in any other creature, as a secondary and instrumental cause, which aids us to acquire the good things relating to eternal life." Hence, eternal happiness can only be hoped for from God, because of His goodness and mercy, and the same is true of all other things, even of temporal goods we prize so much; but in things spiritual as well as material we may use creatures as intermediaries or as in-

[20] 1 Cor. x. 13. [21] John xv. 5. [22] *Ibid.*
[23] Gal. iv. 6. [24] Rom. viii. 15. [25] 2. 2. q. 17 a. 4.

struments. Thus we have faith and place reliance in prayer and in the intercession of the saints, in the sacraments, in the Mass, in the ministers of the Church and in private and public devotions; and this is true also of purely temporal matters. If we are sick, we have recourse to medicine and trust in the skill of a learned doctor, etc., but it is from God that we must ultimately expect the graces and blessings that tend to our eternal welfare, as well as those favors that relate to our temporal happiness.

(c) As our faith must be lively and accompanied by good works, so likewise our hope would be vain and criminal without a holy life, worthy of a disciple of Christ. Who can call upon God for a reward? Who shall be heir of God's kingdom and co-heir with Jesus Christ? Who are they that are called blessed by Our Lord? Not those who have faith and hope only, but who besides have charity: the poor in spirit, the meek, those who mourn, those who thirst after justice, the merciful, the clean of heart, the peacemakers and they that suffer persecution for God's sake. To all these the sight of God and the joys of heaven are promised. Jesus calls His disciples the light of the world and He gives His reason therefor, when He says: "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven."[26]

But you preach to us, answer the impious, that we must put our whole trust in God and hope all from His goodness and that we should not rely on our good works. True, God is infinitely good but also infinitely just, and He rewards each one as he deserves. What? Shall His goodness be a reason for worldlings to offend Him, to persevere in their evil deeds and to provoke Him? Let them fear and tremble for "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire." [27]

To expect salvation from God without serving Him, that is, without loving Him, for "He that loves Me," says Our Lord, "keeps My Commandments," is rash and contradicts all the teachings of the Gospel and all revelation made to man by our Creator from the beginning of the world. If such a rash expectation of salvation is deliberate and volun-

[26] Matt. v. 3-16. [27] Matt. vii. 19.

tary, especially if actions correspond to the judgment, that is, if one leads a sinful life and has nevertheless the firm conviction that he will be saved in spite of his sins, it is nothing less than presumption, the dreadful sin against the Holy Ghost, a sin so heinous that it is seldom forgiven; for it requires a miracle of grace to save a presumptuous man from dying impenitent. Penance is necessary unto salvation for all those who fall into a mortal sin of commission or omission after Baptism; for, says our Redeemer: "Except you do penance you shall all likewise perish." [28] Let us not think that this doctrine preached by the Savior was new: penance was imposed upon Adam and Eve after their sin, and penance from that time on was continually preached by God through Moses and the prophets of God, and has been ever since a sign of salvation; for, since all have sinned, penance is required of all men.

Since penance was at all times necessary, since Adam's fall, to all his descendants, we should not think that penance is the only thing required of the sinner, for, as we have seen, hope is fruitless without good works: he is still bound, after his conversion, to do penance and to obey the commandments of God and of His Church, since otherwise he remains in danger of dying the death of a presumptuous reprobate. Neither human respect, nor spiritual sloth, nor the concupiscence of the flesh, nor any other obstacle can dispense the wicked from serving God and doing His holy will. The presumptuous man must lay the ax to the root of the tree and search for the root that is unsound and ruins his spiritual life, and when it is found, he is bound to cut it away, so that the sound roots may still spring up.

There are two general causes of presumption: one is the intention to continue a life of sin and shame, and the other is the reluctance of taking hold of the means of salvation, which constitutes spiritual sloth; but the sin of presumption consists in extolling above measure the mercy of God and in denying His justice. Presumption although a sin against the Holy Ghost is of a lesser malice than despair; because it is more proper to God to forgive than to punish. [29]

[28] Luke xiii. 5. [29] St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 21 a. 2.

There is also a second sort of presumption that rests on one's conviction of being able to do what he cannot do by himself, such as the presumption of being able to avoid mortal sin whilst one wilfully frequents the danger of it, or the presumption of one who leads a wicked life with the expectation of doing penance for his sins later in life, and this is caused by vainglory; but although very sinful, it is not the sin against the Holy Ghost of which there is question here, for God's justice is then not denied.

It is also rash and presumptuous for the impious to lead sinful lives with the expectation that God will grant them the necessary sacraments or dispose them sufficiently to contrition on their death-bed. Has God ever made such a promise? Or can it be expected that he, who has disregarded all the graces of God during his life, will at the last moment be converted by a miracle of grace? The total absence of Christian virtues and good works lead to presumption; but a pious life and the observance of God's commandments in the hope of securing thereby our destiny, strengthens the virtuous man in his already firm hope, and this is obviously reasonable, for hope is fortified by hoping, like faith by believing and charity by loving. Our Savior points out the only road to eternal life, when He was questioned by a doctor of the law, who inquired of Him what was the greatest Commandment of the Law. Jesus answered: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind, and the second is like to this: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two Commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets," [30] that is, all whatsoever is contained in the natural or positive law of God and what the prophets have taught can be reduced to these two.

(C) The last requisite of hope is that it must be accompanied by a salutary fear; for one without the other leads to a precipice. "It is not proper," says St. Bernard, "that we embrace one without the other, for the thought (remembrance) of the judgment alone precipitates into the abyss of despair and an excessive trust in mercy begets a pernicious security." [31] There are two kinds of fear: servile and filial.

[30] Matt. xxii. 35 *seq.* [31] Serm. 6 in *Cant.*

Strictly servile fear has no merit before God: it is the fear of the slave who obeys for no other reason than that his master punishes severely all his shortcomings; it is the fear that leads to despair of which we shall speak presently. The filial fear is the fear of the child that, out of reverence for its father, flees from sin and its dangers because it offends Him. "Fear of the Lord," says the Wise Man, "is the beginning of wisdom," [32] but it is a fear dictated by wisdom which consists in the knowledge of God and of His holy will. Such "Fear of the Lord driveth out sin, for he that is without fear cannot be justified," as he knows not how to curb his passions and the evil inclinations of the flesh. [33]

Salutary fear dilates and "Delights the heart and shall give joy and gladness and length of days." [34] The fear of the Lord must be accompanied by faith, hope and charity and they that possess that fear shall not be confounded. [35] "They that fear the Lord keep His Commandments and seek after the things that are well pleasing to Him; they will prepare their hearts and in His sight will sanctify their souls." [36] Thus we see that hope and filial fear go together, but hope must rest on the goodness and mercy of God, and reverential fear should make us shun sin because it offends our God. The fear of the Lord also gives patience and longsuffering until the day of His visitation. [37] It is of this salutary fear with hope in the Lord that St. Augustine speaks, when he exclaims: "Sweet hope, thou makest us suffer with pleasure and suavity! Ah! my brethren, love then that virtue, keep it, but join fear to it: he that hopes and fears not, neglects himself; he that fears without hope, is discouraged and falls like a stone to the bottom of the abyss." [38]

Fear without hope carries man to the abyss of hell; it is despair. Despair, an awful sin, only little less grievous than infidelity or unbelief and hatred of God, consists in the loss of all hope in God's mercy. It springs from the sinner's conviction that God cannot or will not condone his offenses. Thus he has a wrong estimation of God's perfection; but it is not a sin of the intellect only; for despair

[32] Prov. i. 7. [33] Eccli. i. 27. [34] Eccli. i. 12. [35] *Ibid.*, ii. 8...11.
[36] *Ibid.*, ii. 19 *seq.* [37] *Ibid.*, ii. 21. [38] *Serm. ad Fratres.*

is also a passion of the irascible appetites of the soul, which through fear of God's justice prevents the sinner from having recourse to the means of salvation. This conviction that his sins are too great to deserve pardon is false and contrary to faith, clearly taught us in Holy Writ: "If the wicked do penance for all his sins he has committed...living he shall live, and shall not die." [39] But the despairing man need not necessarily have lost his faith; for his fear of God's judgment so far overwhelms all other affections of the heart, that the false judgment he forms of divine mercy may not be a denial of any article of revealed truth. He may or may not think of God's goodness and mercy and justice, and he may believe all that he has been taught regarding the divine perfections; but he, who has abandoned all hope, only considers himself and his malice, and fails to apply God's goodness and mercy to his case, and the severity of infinite justice alone is taken into consideration, and thus in view of his sins, the despairing man sees but God's implacable wrath and His swift vengeance hanging over him. Therefore as faith depends mainly on the operations of the mind and despair belongs principally to the appetitive passions of the lower part of the soul, despair may exist in man like any other sin without the loss of faith. [40]

There are two causes which may lead to despair. It springs sometimes from the vice of lust and at other times from sloth in matters relating to one's spiritual obligations, which must be complied with, if we wish to save our souls. As Christian hope regards our eternal welfare, difficult to be attained, hope may be lost, either if we think heaven is easy to be gained or not worth the trouble, or cannot be gained neither through ourselves nor through another. If the sinner relies upon his own power to gain heaven without God's assistance, or trusts in God's goodness alone without co-operation from his part, it is presumption. If the sinner does not value his eternal home above all other acquisitions, the cause of despair is found in that he seeks all his happiness in impure satisfactions and despises spiritual things and their interior delights and consolations. If

[39] Ezech. xviii. 21. [40] St. Thomas, q. 20 a. 1, 2, 3.

the sinner is convinced that the happiness of heaven cannot be attained neither through himself nor through another, despair has its source in dejection, pusillanimity or sadness, and sadness produces sloth,[41] which consists in an unwillingness to undertake anything that may tend towards salvation.

The sin of despair is of all sins the most pernicious, even more than unbelief and hatred of God,[42] and the spiritual disease is not easily cured. Sinners inclined towards that fatal crime should seek a cure for their ailment by having recourse to the physicians appointed by the Savior to heal the infirmities of the soul, to wit: the priests of God. Obedience and good will under their direction will soon restore trust in God and firm hope in the means established by Him as a sure cure for all spiritual diseases; but the patient should maintain a salutary or a filial fear of God's judgments, that is, a fear such as we have explained; not that of a slave who dreads the eyes of his master, but that of a disciple of Christ, who rejoices because his Master sees his works and writes all his virtuous deeds in the book of life. Fear; but let your trust and hope in God's goodness and mercy predominate over your fear, for He is more inclined to spare than to chastise. One and the other are necessary to reach our eternal destiny; but hope united to the perfect love of God does still more: it enables us to make rapid strides towards perfection, and to this end our efforts should unceasingly tend. St. Bernard gives us the last word on the subject of hope allied to fear: "It behooves us not to embrace one without the other, for the remembrance of the judgment alone precipitates into the abyss of despair and an excessive confidence in mercy begets a pernicious security." [43]

We have learned that we recede from God completely by mortal sin, and only partially by wilful venial sin. Now, despair consists in a complete abandonment of God and His promises; but simple distrust does not go that far, and it may be said to be a weak and languishing hope, a hope that hesitates and is caused by an indiscreet fear of God's

[41] *Ibid.*, iv. [42] St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 22 a. 3.

[43] Serm. 6 in *Cant.*

judgment and a wrong conception of the horror we should have of mortal sin, for, "Despair," says the Angelic Doctor, "comes from the fear of God and from the horror of sin, in so far as man abuses these good sentiments and finds in them an occasion to despair." [44] He that fears God so much and holds sin in such horror that he hesitates fully to trust in God's promises and wavers between firm hope and criminal despair, sins already at least venially. No matter what may be the cause of this mistrust, whether it has its source in the fear of God or in the horror of sin or in the deplorable sloth, which keeps one from taking hold of the means of salvation, hope must be restored in the heart. If the sinner be overwhelmed by the horror of his sins, he should be reassured that his sins are as nothing compared to the infinite mercy of God or like a spider's web, according to St. John Chrysostom, which the wind tears and scatters along or like a breath compared to the infinite merits of the Redeemer; and in the first case, as the fear of God is in itself salutary, the sinner is to be encouraged by the firm conviction of the infinite goodness of God, who is more inclined to forgive than to punish, of which we find many examples in Holy Writ, *e. g.*, in David, St. Paul, St. Peter, etc., and "God has so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting." [45] If despair or the inclination thereto comes from depression originating in material losses or in sadness caused by separation through the death of those dear to the sufferer, recourse should be had to prayer and to such considerations that will not only restore the despairer's confidence in God, but will encourage him to bear with fortitude the most severe trials, and even to accept them with joy, that he may secure thereby the everlasting joys of heaven; such are the shortness of life and the eternity of the delights of paradise; the love of God for His rational creatures, who will not allow anyone to be tempted above his strength; the creation, the Incarnation and the Redemption through the death of the only-begotten of the Father; the institution of the Church, grace and the sacraments; for they all tend to our union with God upon

[44] 1. 2. q. 20 a. 1 to 2. [45] John iii. 16.

earth and to a familiar companionship with Him for an endless eternity. Finally, if despair is caused by spiritual sloth, the same considerations may be employed, but as they may have but little effect upon those who love the pleasures of the present time above all the delights promised in the next, the latter should be confronted with the terrible truths of the divine wrath upon impenitent sinners. Let them remember the dreadful punishments inflicted upon the whole world at the deluge and in the destruction of Sodom and its neighboring cities, of which the Dead Sea is as it were a permanent testimonial. Not only the inspired writings, but the history of the Jewish people from Abraham to the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews over the face of the globe, clearly teach us the mercy of God to repentant sinners and His implacable wrath and dire vengeance upon the wicked, who persist in their evil ways. Therefore the Holy Ghost warns the evil-doer: "Follow not in thy strength the desires of thy heart....for God will surely take revenge." [46] "Say not: I have sinned and what harm hath befallen me? For the Most High is a patient rewarder... Mercy and wrath quickly come from Him and His wrath looketh upon sinners. Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day, for His wrath shall come on a sudden and in the time of vengeance He will destroy thee." [47] Even suppose that the unrepenting sinner escapes God's vengeance in this world, how terrifying will be to him the sentence of the Supreme Judge on the last day: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." [48]

Involuntary motions of despair which are either caused by a melancholic temperament or by dejection originating in severe losses or in a temptation of the evil one, are not sinful; but as soon as one is aware of the dangerous sentiments of his soul and its inclination to distrust God's goodness and promises, as he does not check and overcome those feelings of distrust, he sins at least venially. If he seriously doubts God's ability or willingness to forgive the penitent sinner, he commits a grievous sin against hope, provided his judgment have not been impaired by his sadness or de-

[46] Eccli. v. 3. [47] *Ibid.*, iii. 4, 7, 9. [48] Matt. xxv. 41.

jection, and if he recollects the teachings of the Bible as interpreted by the Church, and still perseveres in his doubt, he may sin also more or less grievously against faith by his hesitation. "He that wavereth," says St. James, "is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind. Therefore let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." [49]

Worse than doubt is the judgment one forms that there are sins which of their nature are of such a malice that God cannot or will not condone them and that therefore His promises of eternal life and the means to reach it, such as prayer and the sacraments, are no longer applicable to his case. Then he is guilty of despair and directly sins against faith. Still as long as he has recourse to prayer and other means of salvation, although he may be in doubt of their efficacy on account of his unworthiness, he cannot be said to despair, for "Despair denotes not only the absence of hope, but includes a certain abandonment of the thing desired, because of the impossibility of attaining it," [50] so that if one do not abandon all the means by which he may reach his eternal destiny, he is not guilty of the sin of despair, as he has still a faint hope of saving his soul from eternal punishment.

Although we are not allowed to doubt God's mercy and goodness and His fidelity to His promises, we are never certain of our salvation, for we are never sure that we shall remain faithful to our duties towards God and neighbor, nor are we absolutely certain that our past sins have been forgiven. It is heretical to hold with the reformers of the sixteenth century that man is justified when he knows that he is justified and that no one is justified unless he believe that he is justified. [51] Therefore, a moderate fear of our salvation in view of our infirmities and weakness is salutary, because it makes us confide in God alone and seek from Him the necessary help to merit our destiny.

In conclusion we should all consider attentively the weakness of our nature and its inclination to evil springing from the passions of the soul, the concupiscence of the flesh, the

[49] James i, 6, 7. [50] St. Thomas, 1. 2. q. 40 a. 4 to 3.

[51] *Trid. Sess.* 6, c. 6.

baneful example of a wicked world and the wiles of Satan. The consciousness of our dependence upon God and our trust in His infinite goodness, will stimulate us to look upon Him as our only hope in all the dangers that surround us and in all the obstacles we encounter on the road to salvation. The knowledge of our misery will keep away presumption, and confidence in God's bountiful love towards His children upon earth, will save us from falling into the abyss of despair. The filial fear of our Father in heaven will confirm us in our hope and spur us on to shun sin and to practice conscientiously all our duties; and thus, all serious dangers being removed, we shall advance daily towards perfection. This progress in holiness by the virtue of hope will be still better understood after we have considered attentively the salutary effects of Christian hope.

V. 1. The first effect of hope is that it makes man capable of practicing the most arduous duties of a Christian. The virtue of hope consists in interior motions of the soul, which incline it towards the infinitely good God, whom it trusts one day to possess and from whom it also expects the means to reach its final happiness. This necessarily begets sentiments of devotedness and promptitude in serving Him, whom we know to be the Source of all the good things we hope for. These affections are neither in the intellect nor in the will, but they are the effects of their operations, and they are located in the inferior part of the soul, we often call the heart, because it is the seat of the soul's motions and sentiments for good or evil. The reason thereof, as we have explained before, is that the fleshy heart feels the motions of the passions in two different ways: the appetitive sentiments or motions caused by anything agreeable dilate or expand the heart by accelerating its movements, whilst the irascible passions contract the heart and keep the blood from circulating freely towards the different parts of the body thereby causing pallidity, as is the case when one is under the influence of great fear or anger. This explains what David says: "My Lord, when Thou hast dilated my heart I have run in the way of Thy Commandments," that is, from the moment Thou hast filled my soul with the firm trust in Thy goodness, in Thy promises of eternal life

and in the means to reach it, I have been prompt in executing Thy will. The hope of possessing God had made the Prophet King choose the will of God for his frequent meditations and constant study that he might conform his life to it.

The frequent meditation on the bounty of God and on the joys of heaven increase and fortify our hope, which in turn makes us capable of undertaking great things in God's service and of making great sacrifices, even the sacrifice of our life. It is even so with men in the pursuit of riches, pleasures and glory. What schemes are not concocted, what problems are not studied, how many sleepless hours are not passed in order to insure the successful execution of deeply laid plans for the purpose of acquiring wealth or a position of dignity and of honor! What promptness and vigilance in carrying out well-calculated projects! What perilous journeys are often undertaken and even what injustices are sometimes perpetrated, and all that in the hope of acquiring some temporal advantages, which man can at most only enjoy a few years. If worldlings make such great efforts and sacrifices to acquire some transitory goods, shall it be said that the Christian has not at least an equal courage and determination to secure for himself the imperishable riches and delights of a blessed eternity? Admire the example of the saints, who were so eager to increase in merit by constant fidelity in the service of God, and strove so earnestly to follow in the footsteps of their Master. If the Son of God did not consider it below His dignity to come upon earth and to assume our nature that He might merit for us the rights of an endless happiness, and willed to suffer and die to teach us the value of salvation, should we be less willing to deserve that inestimable boon for ourselves? St. Paul accused before the Governor Felix, answered among other things: "I confess to thee....of having hope in God....that there shall be a resurrection of the just and unjust, and therein do I endeavor to have always a conscience without offense towards God and towards men." [52] What St. Paul and so many saints have done we can do also, if we are strengthened by the hope of a happy resur-

[52] Acts xxiv. 14-16.

rection among the just, courageously to practice our Christian duties towards God and our neighbor.

But some one may ask whether it is not more perfect to serve God for the sole love of Him, than in expectation of a reward howsoever great? True, God is entitled to our homage and service, even if there were no heaven to reward the just; but the perfect love of God, which consists in doing all things for His own sake, does not exclude the hope of participating in His glory and beatitude: the proper of infinite goodness is to communicate itself to others, and therefore, if God is loved for His sake, we love in Him the promises He deigned to make and His inclination to share His riches with us; in other words, we see a reason of our trust in the very perfections of God as well as in His promises. Moreover, our good Father knows our miseries, our sinful nature and our inclination to evil pleasures, and He does not exact from us in the midst of the numerous obstacles to our salvation that we should possess such perfection as to wish with St. Paul to become anathema from Christ.[53] As long as hope strengthens us and fortifies us in God's service and encourages us to become imitators of His Son Jesus and of His saints, we should take hold of it as a powerful means of salvation.

Besides, hope is to the soul what vitality is to the body: it renders man prompt in the service of God and animates him to undertake great things, as we shall presently see, and therefore, we must conclude that when hope languishes, all virtues begin to languish.

When pious souls begin to feel a disgust for prayer and other devotions and are becoming slothful in the practice of good works, if they will only examine themselves carefully, they will usually find the cause of their unwonted tepidity in their neglect of exercising their hope or trust in God. Let them bear in mind that he that possesses one virtue in all its perfection, is perfect in all, and he who is in the state of grace, increases in every virtue by the practice of each particular virtue: faith is the foundation of them all; hope begets Christian fortitude and gives vitality to all and charity perfects them. Hope not less than faith and charity

[53] Rom. ix. 3.

needs to be practiced. Therefore when hope is growing weak, it should be strengthened by all those considerations that revive and quicken it. Cold and languid Christians should exert themselves and humbly supplicate the bountiful giver of all good that they "May abound in hope and in the power of the Holy Ghost." [54]

2. As a necessary consequence of our fidelity in observing God's Commandments and the duties of our state of life, hope, being revived thereby, instills greater promptitude and superhuman courage in overcoming the obstacles to salvation, especially in times of cruel persecutions. Human hope stirs man up to obtain what he ardently desires and he willingly braves all danger to life and property to acquire it. Christian hope is stronger than all worldly love, greater than the natural love of friends, of father and mother, wife and children, yea more than the love of life itself; because the joys of heaven surpass the totality of all the goods of this world: therefore we glory in the name of disciple of Christ, which brings us into kinship with our heavenly Father; for "If sons, heirs also, heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ; yet so, if we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified with Him." [55] Surely the co-heirs with the Savior, whose life was one of sufferings, cannot expect to escape them, and furthermore what are all the sufferings of this valley of tears compared with the joys of the next life? "I reckon," continues St. Paul, "that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us." [56] Let us then be imitators of Christ and of the holy martys, who have laid down their life to secure an immortal crown of glory. Among them were women and children, can we not do what they did?

3. Hope makes those who trust in God support with patience all the trials and sufferings of this life. Bear in mind the counsels of the wise man: "Son, when thou comest to the service of God....humble thy heart and endure.... Wait on God with patience....Take all (the tribulations) that shall be brought upon thee, and in thy sorrow endure and in thy humiliation keep patience; for gold and silver

[54] Rom. xv. 13. [55] Rom. viii. 17. [56] *Ibid.*, xviii.

are tried in the fire, but men acceptable (to God) in the furnace of humiliation." [57] What made Job so patient in the midst of all his tribulations but the knowledge that his Redeemer liveth and that he was to rise one day and to see Him in the flesh? "I know," said the holy man, "that my Redeemer liveth and on the last day I shall rise out of the earth, and I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God." [58] What gave the mother of the Maccabees and her seven sons courage and fortitude to overcome the satellites of Antiochus and to despise the sufferings of a cruel martyrdom, if not the hope of a happy resurrection? [59] Holy Scripture commends especially the courage of the mother of the seven martyrs, because "She who beheld her seven sons slain in the space of one day, bore it with a good courage, for the hope that she had in God." [60] What gave the protomartyr of the Christians the fortitude to face death and to despise the fury of the Jews, ready to stone him? The sight of Jesus standing at the right of His Father animated him. [61] If the Church counts among her children thousands of martyrs, it was the hope of an endless happiness that animated them, for "Blessed are those who suffer persecution for God's sake, for they shall possess the kingdom of heaven."

Let us follow the generous heroes of our faith, let the hope of seeing and possessing God be deeply rooted in our mind and heart, and in all adversities let us despise them, for we cannot compare all that this world can offer to the glory that awaits those who have served their God in patience. "We are saved by hope," says the Apostle, "but hope that is seen is not hope.... But if we hope for that which we see not, we wait for it with patience." [62] Hope does more than fortify us in adversity; it makes the faithful Christian suffer with joy. To suffer with patience the misfortunes of this life is a duty, but it is still more perfect to rejoice in our tribulations and to support the insults and injustices of others not only with meekness—for we are forbidden to give way to feelings of anger, hatred and revenge—but, as becometh true disciples of Christ, we must

[57] Eccli. ii. 1 *seq.* [58] Job xix. 25, 26. [59] 2 Mach. vii. 9, 11.
[60] *Ibid.*, 20. [61] Acts vii. [62] Rom. viii. 24.

follow His injunctions: "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you." [63] Thus patience is converted into joy and meekness into the true Christian love of even an unjust persecutor. Of that patience and conformity to the will of God, our Savior gave us an example in His agony in the garden, when He ended His prayer by an absolute resignation to the will of His Father: "Not as I will but as Thou wilt," and of that heroic meekness, when in the midst of His sufferings on the cross, His bed of tortures, He cried out: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." [64] The Apostles Peter and John having been scourged rejoiced because "They were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus," [65] and St. Paul tells us that the Christians of his time gloried in their tribulations. [66]

We have cited the most extraordinary occasions in which hope in action is required to remain patient without murmuring, meek and forgiving towards persecutors and even to rejoice in insults and injustices; but even in our daily life we need the strength and fortitude which hope brings us courageously to fight the battle for salvation against the insidious enemies of our advancement in spiritual life. Those that have Christian perfection in view must take hold of the virtue of hope to encourage them to welcome all opportunities for advancement. They should especially be grateful to God for trials, tribulations, and all kinds of bodily pains and spiritual sufferings, as so many means to progress in virtue. We should first of all rejoice in serving God and consider it an honor to be allowed to serve so great and so good a Master. Hear the curse of God on them who do not: "Because thou didst not serve the Lord, thy God with joy and gladness of heart due to the abundance of all things, thou shalt serve thy enemy, whom the Lord will send upon thee in want of all things;" [67] yea, unless we serve God freely and joyfully, we shall serve our archenemy Satan, who shall tyrannize over us. Therefore let the Christian always rejoice and especially in adversity and trials, like St. Paul who could say: "I exceedingly abound with joy

[63] Matt. xii. 4. [64] Luke xxiii. 34. [65] Acts v. 40.
[66] 1 Cor. v. 3. [67] Deut. xxviii. 47 *seq.*

in all our tribulations," [68] and why should he not, if there is a particular blessing attached to those who have cause to bewail their condition, their trials and sufferings: "Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted." Is it then such a great wonder that so many saints feared nothing more than freedom from suffering, like St. Margaret de Pazzi and St. Teresa who in their prayers cried to the Lord: To suffer or die? All ye that are troubled and suffer, keep up courage and gladness of heart, for "That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." [69]

VI. Practical suggestions regarding hope and trust in God.

1. The first suggestion regards the temptations against the virtue of hope. When any Christian, in view of his many sins and his weakness to resist his passions, and especially if some of his sins through indulgence have become vices, begins to mistrust God's goodness and promises, his first care ought to be to try to restore in his heart confidence in God, his Creator, Preserver and Redeemer. The answer to the following questions, which they who are tempted should solve for themselves, may be very useful: If God was infinitely happy before He created the world, why did He make all things out of nothing? Why did He make me? After I disobeyed Him by grievous sins why did He still preserve me? Why did the Son of God assume our nature, appear in the world as a child, born of a holy but poor Mother? Why was He during His whole life subjected to poverty, want, and suffering? Why did He die such an ignominious death? Did He not during His whole life preach penance and forgiveness of sins? Why did He institute so many means of salvation: the Church and Sacraments, and why did He give to humble and trustful prayer so much efficacy? And finally why did He give a last proof of His love and affection, when He gave us His own Mother as our own, and that at the moment of consummating the sacrifice of His life? Why has He sent His Apostles all through the world to continue His mission of salvation, assured them His assistance until the end of time, and

[68] 2 Cor. vii. 4. [69] 2 Cor. iv. 17.

promised that the Holy Ghost would abide with His Church? Those and similar questions and their answers cannot fail to bring back confidence in God's goodness and mercy, especially if humble prayer is added to the above considerations. St. Bernard strongly urges the troubled sinner in the most dangerous temptation against hope and precisely at the moment when the sinner feels that he nears the brink of despair, to have recourse to Mary the Mother of mercy: "If you begin," he says, "to descend into the pit of sadness and abyss of despair, think of Mary. In perils, anxieties, in doubts think of Mary and invoke her. Let her sweet name be always on your lips and be engraven in your heart. If you pray to her you will not despair; if you think of her you can not go astray." [70]

The Blessed Virgin only needs, as it were, an encouragement from the troubled sinner on the brink of despair, that the graces she will obtain will not be despised, for she is our Mother. She likewise dreads above all the offense against her Son by that awful crime against His goodness and mercy, despair, a sin so heinous that our Savior once revealed to St. Catherine of Sienna that sinner who at the moment of their death, despair of divine clemency, offend and provoke Him more by that one sin than by all their previous sins. It is the sin of Judas, who, before hanging himself, appropriated to himself the words of Cain: "My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon." [71] It is of Judas our Savior said: it were better for him if he had never been born.

2. We should also exercise a firm hope when we are tempted to anger, envy, hatred, revenge and to sins of impurity, which ordinarily can only be overcome by flight or by ardent prayer. Against lust the safest remedy lies in shunning the thoughts or even representations of persons or things that may lead to sin and above all in fleeing from persons and dangerous amusements which are likely to incite to sin; and as this is not always possible in temptations of anger and the vices that spring from it, we should arm ourselves with a courage born of hope to fight valiantly, and to overcome the wiles of Satan: "Be sober and watch," says

[70] Hom. ii. *Supra Missus.* [71] Gen. iv. 13.

the Prince of the Apostles, "because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour; whom resist ye, strong in faith," [72] that is, by trusting in God; for, as the same Apostle continues, "The same temptations and afflictions befall our brethren in the world" and Christ Jesus Himself "will after you have suffered a little, perfect you and confirm you." [73] If we are weak, let our confidence be therefore the greater in the Savior, the Son of God; for saith the same Apostle: "This is the confidence that we have towards Him: That whatsoever we shall ask according to His will, He heareth us." [74]

Prayer is a remedy against all evil, but it finds especially its efficacy when we firmly trust that what we ask shall be given unto us. A prayer without an entire confidence in God's goodness and willingness to grant us what we pray for, provided that what we ask be proper and suitable, is simply an insult and a covert denial of His promise: "Ask and you shall receive."

3. There is no occasion in our life, in which we should more often bring hope into practice than in all kinds of contrarieties repugnant to our nature; for they occur so frequently that unless we turn them to our spiritual advantage, we lose many opportunities of meriting. In all that happens we should see the hand of God, who furnishes us a new proof of His love and affection, even in things that are most opposed to our natural inclinations; and this regards not only the things of the body, as sickness, hunger, thirst, painful accidents, but those of the soul as well, as the loss of those dear to us, injustices, insults, persecutions and ingratitude, as well as in the least untoward events so common to all of us.

Humility, patience and meekness are noble virtues, that make the Christian who practices them very dear to Our Lord, and how shall we be able to observe them on all occasions, unless we be strengthened and fortified by the hope that the least suffering borne for the love of God or in imitation of our divine Savior, will increase our merit and obtain a greater glory for an endless eternity.

It is but too common to find novices in the knowledge

[72] 1 Peter v. 8. [73] *Ibid.*, ix. 10. [74] *Ibid.*, xvii.

and practice of perfection, who in their first fervor, desire to prove by heroic deeds their love of God, and cannot without visible annoyance or feeling of resentment suffer patiently and gladly the least disrespect or slight. Our masters of spiritual life teach us that we should esteem equally all things indifferent in themselves, that is, things neither good nor bad, such as health and sickness, riches and poverty, honor and dishonor, praise and contumely, a long and a short life, etc.; but as sickness, poverty and dishonor give us a better opportunity of practicing humility with patience and meekness, should we not welcome them? "Learn of Me," says Our Lord, "that I am meek and humble of heart." Hope will induce us, if we have our eternal welfare at heart, to practice humility and meekness. These two moral virtues must enter into all our intercourse with our neighbor, and if we are left without hope, our humility, patience and meekness can not last long.

ARTICLE III

Charity

Chapter I

I. Definition of the Virtue of Charity—It Unites Us to God—By It the Holy Ghost Dwells in the Soul—Perfect Charity—Imperfect Love of God—Through Charity a Friendship Exists Between God and Man, Due to Sanctifying Grace—It Makes Our Good Works Performed in the State of Grace, Meritorious of Heaven—II. Means by Which Charity is Secured: 1. A First Means Consists in Begging It Earnestly of God, Not Only to Acquire but also to Preserve It—2. The Second Means Consists in Eradicating Whatever May Stifle Its Growth or Impede Its Efficacy—Within us There Are Two Loves Opposed to Each Other: Love of God and Self-Love—Victory Depends on Our Mistrust of Ourselves and on Our Trust in God—3. Attentive Consideration of the Reasons Which Should Induce us to Love the Sovereign Good Is a Third Means—God is Infinitely Good in Himself and Incomprehensibly Good to us—4. Acts by Which the Love of God May Be Preserved and Increased in Our Heart: (a) Love of Complacency—(b) Love of Preference: It Contains Three Degrees—(c) Love of Benevolence—Zeal—(d) Love of Contrition.

The knowledge we have gathered of the means of perfection, of the obstacles to it, of the moral virtues and of faith and hope should make us tend towards perfection, that is charity; for St. Paul teaches us that perfection is nothing else than charity: "Have," says he, "charity which is the bond of perfection," [1] for it unites all virtues and perfects them, and in their aggregate Christian perfection consists. Again, the end of our creation is our union with God, and, according to St. Augustine, "Charity is a virtue which unites us to God and by it we love Him." [2] This union begins upon earth but is consummated in heaven.

I. Charity is a theological virtue which inclines the soul to love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves for God's sake. The virtue of charity is infused into our

[1] Col. iii. 14. [2] *De Mor. Exc.*, c. II.

souls with sanctifying grace bestowed by the Holy Ghost who dwells within us: "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us." [3] From this quotation we learn that when the Holy Ghost abides with us and embellishes our soul with sanctifying grace to make it a fit dwelling place for Himself, charity and the habitual inclination to love God are infused into the soul. Let us remember here what our catechism has taught us regarding our soul's freedom from original sin through Baptism and from actual sin through Penance after Baptism, and how the soul becomes through habitual grace the temple or the habitation of the Holy Ghost, who sanctifies the soul by His presence. "Know you not," says the Apostle, "that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost who is in you, whom you have from God?" [4] That is, your souls are the temple of the Holy Ghost and as the soul is in every part of the body the members of the body become the dwelling place of the Holy Ghost. With the virtue of charity all our actions, whether internal or external, are raised to the supernatural, because charity unites us to God in such a manner that we participate in the divine nature and hence, with it every one of our good thoughts, words or deeds is meritorious of eternal life.

Charity, the greatest of all virtues, supposes that we love God above all things, for it would cease to be a virtue, if we love a creature as much as God, yea, it would be criminal and such divided love would cause the loss of all moral virtues as well as of charity itself.

Perfect charity consists in loving God not only above all things, but in loving God for His own sake, because He is what He is, that is, infinitely perfect and amiable. "Who is similar to the Lord our God?" [5] He is the Sovereign Good by nature and the sole Infinite Good from all eternity; He alone is necessary and absolute or independent, and all other creatures are necessarily dependent on Him and on His holy will, and therefore they are called contingent beings. He possesses all perfection and in an infinite degree: His power, wisdom, immensity and His majesty surpass all our understanding and all things in the universe, although

[3] Rom. v. 5. [4] 1 Cor. vi. 19. [5] Ps. cxii. 5.

the works of His hand, cannot give us an adequate and perfect concept of His nature and essence. "I am Who am," He said of Himself and hence He alone has within Himself the reason of His infinitely perfect existence.

As we are necessarily limited in perfection and our intelligence cannot comprehend the Infinite Good, God can demand of us but a limited knowledge of His being, and our charity is perfect if we love Him because He is infinitely perfect beyond all our comprehension. Our charity cannot go further.

Besides the perfect love of charity there is the imperfect love of God, often called the love of concupiscence, because with that imperfect charity we love God as our good or because He is good to us. A natural trait of Infinite Goodness is to share Its perfections with others who are capable of participating in them according to God's infinite wisdom. It is this goodness of God, inherent in His nature and His absolute freedom, only limited by His wisdom, that explain the creation of men and angels and the still greater goodness and condescension of which He gave proof when He redeemed sinful man by sending His only begotten Son into the world to free him from the slavery of Satan and from eternal death. It is on this goodness of our Creator and on His promises that we base our hope of a future life by the possession of Him in His kingdom.

Although we should not cease to aim at the perfect love of God for His own sake, or because He is worthy of all the love our souls are capable of, nevertheless we should not, on that account, discard all imperfect love or the love of God for our sake. God is infinitely good in Himself, but also infinitely good to us, and therefore we honor Him with an imperfect love, provided we do not forsake the love of Him for His own sake. Is not God the Author of our being? Will He not be forever our reward in heaven? Perfect and imperfect love of God may well go together and nothing prevents us from utilizing the love of God for our sake to increase our love of Him for His sake. If our happiness in heaven were separable from God or if it consisted in something created by God, there might be danger that man, as he often does on earth, would by loving the

gift, become more indifferent to the Giver; but heaven ceases to be heaven without God and therefore, to desire the happiness of heaven is to desire the possession of the infinite God, who is its joy and felicity. Through all the pages of the Old and New Testaments we see the perfections of God extolled as well as His goodness and mercy towards us, and there can be no other reason assigned for it, than that God wishes to be honored and worshipped as our Benefactor and the best of Fathers.

In heaven, were our eternal happiness will be assured, hope will cease in the possession of the infinitely adorable and lovable God, but as long as our pilgrimage on earth lasts, we must join faith and hope to charity to encourage and strengthen us in our continual warfare against the enemies of our salvation. "Charity and hope have the same end;" says St. Thomas, "charity includes the union of the soul with that end, but hope supposes it still far distant." [6] It is proper and just that we should love God because of His infinite perfection and that we should love Him even if He had never promised us an eternal reward; yea, even if no merit were attached to our love of Him; but when we consider all the benefits bestowed on man and the promise of an eternal union with the infinitely perfect God, our hearts are inflamed with an ardent desire to possess the infinitely good God, and that very hope and desire impel us and prompt us to love with an ardent love our infinitely amiable and sovereign Lord, whom we hope to possess without fear of ever losing Him.

Charity is not only the love of God, but it is likewise a friendship contracted or entered into with Him. "It must be averred," says St. Thomas, "that charity denotes not only the love of God, but also His friendship, which adds to love a mutual return of love with a certain mutual communication." [7] By the words "a certain communication" the Angelic Doctor means a communication of goods, by which one shares with his friend what he can give and what will be acceptable to him; for mutual love supposes a real friendship and we find it clearly in charity. We have the word of our Savior for our assertion: "He who loves Me,"

[6] 1. 2. q. 65 a. 4. [7] 1. 2. q. 65 a. 5.

He says, "is loved by My Father and I will love Him," [8] and the beloved disciple seems to go still further in teaching the effects of this mutual love, when he says that: "God is charity and he that abideth in charity abideth in God and God in him." [9] "God hath first loved us," [10] and if we correspond to the divine love, a real and true friendship ensues, which is evidenced by the mutual communication of all the good things that one may desire of the other. Who can describe the value of that friendship to man and of that mutual exchange of goods between an infinitely rich God and His poor and dependent creatures? If here on earth the trivial adage holds good that "between intimate friends all things are common," what may we not expect from our friendship with the Infinite Good inclined to share Its wealth with us?

The friendship of the mutual love between God and man has its source in sanctifying grace, which, as shown above, the Holy Ghost bestows when He comes to dwell in a soul. God remains eternally the same: He gives abundantly, but remains infinitely rich after having enriched millions of souls upon earth and the blessed spirits in heaven. The more man loves his divine Benefactor, the more love he receives in return, and as the friendship becomes closer and more intimate, the soul grows richer in grace, which is nothing less than a geater participation of the divine nature, according to the expression of the Prince of the Apostles. [11] Besides the friendship, begun here on earth, gives to the souls united to God by charity a right to the possession of God in the realms of His glory. "The friendship which unites man to God and which consists in the intimate relations, established between them, begins," says St. Thomas, "in this life and is perfected in the next through glory." [12]

Another effect of charity, which naturally results from the friendship which exists between God and the soul, is that all good works performed with it on earth, are worthy of an increase of glory and happiness in the life to come. Let us note here what our faith teaches us, viz: that all in-

[8] John xiv. 21. [9] 1 John iv. 16. [10] *Ibid.*, xix.
[11] 2 Peter i. 4. [12] 1. 2. q. 65 a. 5.

tentions and resolutions, all words and deeds, no matter how laudable they may be in themselves—not excepting the exterior observance of the evangelical counsels—are devoid of merit, unless performed in the state of sanctifying grace, that is, unless the soul remains in charity. This is clearly preached by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Corinthians.[13] This is the doctrine of the doctors of the Church, regarding the virtues of the Pagans, the zeal of the heretics and schismatics; for our Catholic doctrine teaches us that if they should give up their bodies to be burned in maintaining their belief in their false doctrines, it avails them nothing; but with charity the least virtuous thought, word or deed is meritorious of an eternal reward. St. Thomas gives the reason therefor by saying that "Charity is the mother of all virtues as well as the root, because it is their form, (that is, it determines the quality and goodness of all virtues by raising them to the supernatural). Forsooth, a natural virtue, such as to distribute large sums among the poor through natural inclination, can only merit a temporal reward, but when done in charity, the deed becomes supernatural, because the intention of the act or the end one has in view is referred to a Christian duty or to the holy will of God, who dictates or counsels the deed and rewards it a hundred fold in the next world."[14] Thus St. Thomas teaches that there can be no true virtue without charity and he corroborates his doctrine, by citing St. Paul: "If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."[15]

Let us cherish the beautiful virtue of charity and defend it against any possible loss. It is the mother and root of all virtues; it infuses life into all of them and purifies the Christian's affections and intentions. It makes man an object of complacency in the sight of God, and renders his most indifferent acts meritorious of heaven; it unites him to his Maker, by a true and happy friendship, begun here below, but perfected in the life to come.

II. Having now acquired a clear notion of charity, our next step is to find the means to acquire and to preserve the

[13] 1 Cor. xiii. 1 *seq.* [14] St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 63 a. 7, 8.

[15] 1 Cor. xxiii. 3.

beautiful virtue. 1. Our first aim and purpose towards the acquisition of charity should be to beg it earnestly of God. When we consider its excellence and our infirmities, we are overwhelmed by the conviction that of ourselves we are unable to make the slightest movement either towards its acquisition or towards its preservation; but we should not lose sight of the necessity of preparing our souls for its reception and increase. There is one truth that should animate all souls striving towards perfection and that is that our Father in heaven is more eager to bestow the greatest of all His gifts upon us than we can desire or solicit it. Charity is the fire that purifies the gold of our affections and consumes its dross, and to it the Savior refers when He says: "I have come to cast fire upon earth, and what will I but that it be enkindled." [16] Does this mean that God will cast the fire of His love upon any heart? Undoubtedly not; our hearts must be prepared for its reception by ardent desires and humble and devout prayers. Let us remember that the Apostles, who were to be the instruments employed by Our Lord to enkindle the fire of charity in the hearts of men, had first to prepare themselves for its reception by a ten days retreat of prayer, and only thereafter the fiery tongues came upon them on Pentecost day, which visibly denoted that they were now ready to propagate and diffuse the sacred fire to the extremities of the world, as the heavenly flame was now burning in their souls.

2. The second means to obtain and increase charity consists in destroying within us all that may retard or stifle its growth. The greatest obstacle to charity is inordinate self-love. There is a love of self which God even commands, as when He imposes upon us as a duty the proper care of our health, and the obligation to acquire sufficient learning to comply with the duties of our particular state; but that love should not be a hindrance to our advancement in spiritual life. It is in this sense that we must understand the saying of St. Paul, that "No man ever hateth his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it." [17] The love of self ceases to be proper if it have not God for object or if it be greater than that which we should bestow upon ourselves; for if it

[16] Luke xii. 49. [17] Eph. v. 29.

be excessive, it smothers the fire of divine love in our hearts and may even extinguish it entirely. Our love of self must be restricted and circumscribed by the law of God and by right reason guided by the teachings of the Gospel.

As charity is the love of God above all things and of our neighbor as of ourselves for the love of God, that most excellent of the divine virtues inclines us to the threefold love of God, of ourselves and of our neighbor, and he who loves God keeps His Commandments and follows the dictates of right reason enligthened by faith. Why do we not always obey the precepts of the law of God and the impulse of right reason? Because, owing to the sin of our first parents, man's nature has been corrupted: the concupiscence of the flesh and the passions of the soul are not any longer subject to reason nor is reason to God. "There is within me," says the Apostle, "another law....fighting against the law of my mind," [18] so that "The good which I will, I do not, but the evil which I will not, that I do." [19] Through inordinate self-love our actions are not regulated according to God's holy will, but we are subject, like a slave to his master, to the disorderly passions of the soul and the evil inclinations and desires of the flesh, which we call its concupiscence.

Thus we find within us two loves opposed to each other, like two hostile citadels constructed to annihilate each other. "Two loves," says St. Augustine, "have constructed within us like two hostile cities, the love of self, a city of mud, which goes to the contempt of God, and the love of God, a city entirely celestial, which goes to the contempt of self. The first glories in itself and the second glories in the Lord." [20] Our Father in heaven cannot be indifferent to the struggle that is constantly going on in our souls between the two hostile camps, because self-will dishonors God by aiming at dethroning Him from the place He should rightfully hold in our hearts, and because our love of Him, which sacrifices self-love for His sake, as well as our affection for and subjection to Him increase in proportion to the contempt of self and to the mastery we wield over our evil inclinations. "The diminution of cupidity is the growth of

[18] Rom. vii. 23. [19] *Ibid.*, 19. [20] *City of God,* Bk. 14, c. 28.

charity; perfection is the exemption of cupidity," says the same holy Doctor, and therefore it behooves us constantly to oppose the ill-regulated desires of honor and glory, of preferment and domination, and to mortify whatever flatters the senses, for all self-love obscures the understanding and weakens the will for good, so that the intellect becomes a blind leader to the weakened efforts of the soul in practicing any Christian virtue, whilst the vices, through indulgence, grow like weeds in a neglected garden and smother the first growth of pious and virtuous affections in the soul. The evil inclinations of our being, a consequence of original sin, if not counteracted and subdued, will cause the most frightful ravages in our depraved nature; pride, avarice, lust, anger, gluttony, envy and sloth and all their evil consequences, like so many daughters of a depraved parent, will come to life, grow and thrive and that in proportion to the indulgence wherewith they are treated; for, if it is true that we advance in perfection in proportion to the violence we do to ourselves, it is equally true that we become the more depraved, the more indulgent we become towards our ill-regulated passions and sensual appetites. We should particularly be on our guard against the insidious temptations of pride and vainglory, for they are apt to lurk in all our occupations, even in those undertaken with a view of pleasing God. The vices of lust, drunkenness, anger, hatred and all kinds of injustices, open resistance to authority and the like, are so manifestly heinous that well-disposed souls will rarely be guilty of them; but there are many faults of less consequence, which, having their source in self-love and innate pride, retard our advancement towards perfection; among them are wilful negligences and imperfections, and they are exceedingly dangerous, because they are not easily detected. Among the latter are thoughts of vainglory, conceit of our attainments and our successes, and the corresponding pleasure we receive from being praised or sadness from being despised or neglected; likewise attachments to one thing or person more than to another, love of finery, amusements and good cheer and the inclination to speak of our connections, of our influential friends or of our past deeds to seek praise from men. This kind of self-love is

so cunning that it sometimes hides itself under a cloak of a virtue we pretend to possess or of an inward vanity we desire to combat. Of this we find an example in those who glorify themselves in the contempt of vainglory. From the above we learn that we should ferret out the least self-complacency, and attribute all the good we do and the successful issues of all our enterprises to God's generosity, for we should be fully convinced of the truth expressed by the Apostle that "All our sufficiency is from God." [21] Our sojourn in this valley of tears is one of constant struggle, which will only end with our last breath, but we should keep up courage, for our good Father in heaven, who sees our efforts, will not abandon us in the warfare undertaken for His sake. It is a struggle of life or death, a mortal combat, not of the body but of the soul, and on the issue, our eternal salvation depends. When we consider our weakness, our inconstancy and the many enemies opposed to us, we find ample cause for despair, were it not that we are assured of divine help, provided we arm ourselves against the enemies of our salvation with the weapons which a benign God offers for our defense. Our enemies are many, persistent and stubborn, and faintness and cowardice will cause our ruin. The combat is long and desperate, but full of consolation; for victory after victory which is sure to follow, if we fight under the banner of the Savior, and mistrust ourselves but trust in Him, our Leader, brings us an even greater peace and security as well as the certainty of an eternal reward. The sacrifices we will make to obtain an assured victory, receive a measure of reward even in this life. Thousands of saints, who have abandoned the life of sin, invite us to fight with courage and determination, assuring us that the consciousness of doing our duty and the heavenly consolations conferred on the valiant soldier of Christ far exceed all the pleasures of worldlings. No one better than St. Augustine could explain the happiness of the converted sinner who has given up the world and all its pleasures to serve his God. He admits in his *Confessions,* [22] that the warfare against the concupiscence of his flesh was desperately and stubbornly fought. The pleasures of an

[21] 2 Cor. iii. 5.

[22] Bk. 9, c. 1.

unbridled passion were long before his mind; he hesitated at first, but when he had fully determined to renounce them and undertook resolutely to vanquish his passions, "How sweet and agreeable," he writes, "suddenly became the privations of those vain pleasures. Ah! how happy I was then to renounce what I had until then feared to lose."

3. The third means to acquire charity is to consider attentively and to revolve in our mind the motives which should impel us to love the Sovereign Good. God is love; He is like a sacred fire that inflames every well disposed heart. We must draw near that sacred fire if we wish that our hearts should burn with its flame. His infinite perfection should frequently be the theme of our serious thoughts and our familiar conversations. "Ah how good the good God is," blessed Julia used to say to her sisters. Truly God is infinitely good in Himself, and infinitely good to us. God is infinitely amiable or good in Himself: His infinite perfections which constitute His incomprehensible amiability should often be the subject of our meditations. His essential beauty, holiness, power, wisdom, majesty compared to what we know of earthly beauty convince us that the latter is but a faint shadow of God's loveliness; and the reason is that all the qualities we find in created beings and millions of beings more perfect which God could create, are only an infinitesimal participation of God's perfections and loveliness. God is also infinitely good to us and therefore merits all the love our soul is capable of. We owe Him all that we are and all that we have: existence of body and soul and the whole universe which God created for the use and comfort of man. In the supernatural order, we owe Him grace, our eternal destiny and the means to reach it, our redemption through Christ, the institution of the Church and the glorious examples of the Savior and of the saints, all tending to our blissful union with the infinitely amiable and lovable God in heaven; but among all the truths of our holy religion there is none more useful and proper to inflame our hearts with a sincere love of God, than the frequent meditation on the passion and death of the Savior, undertaken out of pure love for ungrateful man.

There are various reasons why Christ died so horrible

a death, but among them there is one consideration more than all the others that should inflame our hearts with an ardent love of the Father, who sacrificed His well-beloved Son and the Son, who accepted the sacrifice, and that is the incomprehensible love the Father manifested in delivering up His Son to the tortures and the love of the Son, who gladly laid down His life to save us from sin and eternal death. "No greater love," says the Savior Himself, "any one hath than he who lays down his life for his friend." Of the Father's love the Apostle says: "He hath not spared His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not also with Him, given us all things?" [23] Truly all other gifts are as nothing compared to the gift of what God the Father holds most dear, His only Son, born of His own substance before all ages. Is God not infinitely good to us when He has delivered up His only Son for us all and when He offers Himself and His own felicity as our eternal reward in heaven? Can an infinite God do more?

4. To the means already explained we must join exercises prompted by charity or acts proper to preserve and increase the love of God in our hearts. If we take the true and sincere love of a son for his father as an example, we remark in him his respectful behavior and his tender affection for him; he admires in him the great qualities he possesses and therefore esteems him more than any other being upon earth; he wishes him also all the good he can think of and he regrets exceedingly any disrespect or offense, of which he or any one else may have been guilty towards his parent; and the same dutiful son tries by his conduct to repay his father for all the favors received from his liberality, and finally, he is eager to prove his gratitude by doing in all things the will of the author of his life and of his well-being but next to God. Thus we find acts in this filial love: the love of complacency, the love of preference, the love of benevolence, the love of contrition and conformity to his father's will. We will now apply these five acts to charity or the love of God.

(a) The love of complacency. If a dutiful son loves and admires the good qualities of his father and rejoices in

[23] Rom. viii. 32.

them as well as in the respect and consideration he receives from his fellow-men, how much more should we rejoice in the infinite perfections of God and in all the glory He received from the celestial spirits in heaven and from the saints upon earth.

God is infinitely amiable because of His eternal self-existence. He is not as we are, a contingent being and dependent on some one else, for He is necessary and therefore absolute or independent, as He has in Himself alone the sole reason of His existence and of all that He is and has. He is from all eternity and His reign shall have no end. He is omnipotent; He has made all things and nothing prevents Him from creating a thousand worlds more beautiful than the universe we behold with such admiration in and around us; He can do all things; He is infinitely wise and knows all things; He sees all things past, present and future, as if they were present before His sight, as well as the myriads of worlds He might bring forth out of nothing; He is infinitely holy in all His thoughts and designs; His immensity knows no bounds and everywhere He reigns supreme, with a majesty of which that of the most renowned kings and monarch who have ever lived, is but a vain shadow; He is supremely happy in Himself and would not cease to be so, if all the creatures of the world were miserable; He alone is great and even the angels in heaven are filled with awe and admiration at the sight of His incomprehensible grandeur; in one word, He is all-good and His liberality is unlimited, for He enriches without becoming poorer and He distributes His goods with largeness and remains equally rich. When we contemplate a God so amiable in all His perfections, should we not rejoice that He is so lovable and that the blessed in heaven constantly sing His praises? The beloved disciple invites us to join the nine choirs of angels and the multitude of saints in heaven in rejoicing with them because of His infinite majesty and of the glory which He receives from the elect: "I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude... saying: Alleluia; for the Lord our God, the Almighty hath reigned. Let us be glad and rejoice and give glory to him." [24]

[24] Apoc. xix. 6, 7.

We should especially practice this love of complacency when any misfortune has come upon us and when we are inclined to be troubled and depressed. To rejoice in God's perfections and supreme happiness, when we suffer is the more meritorious because it appears more superhuman. If our charity is true and an intimate friendship has been established between God and us, it is then that our heavenly Father and the best of friends expects that our hearts shall go to Him with the most joyful sentiments and blissful emotions, because of His freedom from suffering and of His infinite felicity; the more so, because He can deliver us from all misfortunes and afflictions, and only allows them for our good.

(b) Love of preference. This love of preference logically follows the belief in God's infinite perfection, for we esteem Him for what He is, and He is infinitely more perfect than the most perfect creatures we can conceive by all the efforts of a far-reaching imagination, reason dictates to us that we must prefer Him to anything else, even to ourselves. This preference we have for God is essential to charity, as it would be unreasonable, yea criminal, to esteem ourselves or any other creature as much as God.

In the love of preference we should discriminate between appreciative love and tender love. The love of appreciation, by which we esteem God because of His perfection is all that is required; for we are not masters of the sensible affections of our heart. Thus we can weep for joy on finding a dear friend or relative we have given up for lost; dutiful sons and daughters may be so affected by the honor bestowed upon their parents that their joy gives vent to warm tears of sensible affection. This tenderness of the heart is not a proof of a greater appreciative love, which springs from the judgment of the soul, and therefore, the true love of God needs not be tender. Nevertheless, this tenderness should not be despised, because it is a gift of God and it may move the will to generous deeds towards God or neighbor, and often adds to the love of God a sweetness and sensible delight, which brings much happiness and consolation to those who strive to live in perfect conformity to the will of God.

Appreciative love or the love of preference contains the essence of true charity and therefore we should not be troubled, if we do not possess this tender love and much less should we strive to aquire it by force, that is, by great exertions of body or soul.

The love of preference contains three degrees. 1. He that is determined to lose all worldly goods, his honor and reputation and the esteem of his neighbor, yea life itself rather than to offend God by mortal sin, has attained the first degree, and this love is indispensable to all those who have arrived at the use of reason, since it is necessary to salvation. 2. He, who would rather lose all the pleasures of this world and what is most dear to him, and besides is ready to undergo persecution and all kinds of afflictions rather than offend God by venial sin, has acquired the second degree. 3. If a Christian prefers to suffer the loss of all things and even exposes his life to imminent danger rather than renounce the state of perfection by following the evangelical counsels, to which he feels himself called by the Spirit of Christ, who says: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor....and then come follow me," [25] and if another embraces a life of poverty, chastity and obedience to follow more closely the Savior's footsteps, both have arrived at the third and most perfect degree of the love of preference. To those who respond to the Savior's appeal, He promises a great treasure in heaven. [26]

It behooves every one who tends toward perfection to adopt this last degree, as the aim of all his desires and earnest efforts. Even they who live in the world and cannot abandon it entirely, should in their state of life follow their Savior's advice to the young man as perfectly as possible. If duty to their own forbids them to sell their worldly goods and to distribute the proceeds to the poor; if their family ties cannot be severed, let them not attach their hearts to riches and let them live soberly and chastely so that with their superabundant wealth and with their hard-earned savings, they may relieve the sufferings of the poor and by their pure lives edify their neighbor.

[25] Luke xviii. 22. *Cfr.* Matt. xix. 21. [26] *Ibid.*

(c) Love of benevolence. From intimate and sincere friendship and still more from filial attachment of dutiful children towards their parents, another kind of love necessarily results, the love of benevolence, which consists in wishing those we cherish all the good things they themselves may desire. It is true that God cannot desire an increase of honor and glory, nor of His blissful existence, since all the good things we observe in Him are intrinsically infinite; but God necessarily demands the subjection and devotedness of all His creatures and this service or worship contributes to His exterior glory. Compliance with this duty by the wilful and free submission of all intelligent beings to their Lord and Master, makes it incumbent upon all the children of our heavenly Father to procure for Him, as far as lies in their power, all possible honor and glory from those over whom they have any influence, and this regards not only priest and religious, but also all them who are in a position to do so. We find many people in the world who are very active in social life, a few exert themselves for the uplift of their neighbor; but how restricted is the number of those who strive to make their God better known, better served and better loved? Many are liberal to the needy, but in their largesses they rather seek their own glory than that of their Creator, and thus they set at naught and disregard the injunction of the Savior: "Let not thy left hand know, what thy right hand doth." [27] It belongs principally to priest and religious to work for the conversion of sinners and for the spread of the Christian doctrine among heathens who know not God, and to bring them as well as heretics and unbelievers into the bosom of the Church; but this cannot be done with success without the co-operation of all its members, who should help either by their prayers or by their alms. What reward is not in store for them whose hearts bleed for the miserable condition of the Pagans, and who lay aside their surplus earnings for the benefit of the Catholic missions throughout the world!

The love of benevolence when ardent and free from inordinate self-love is called zeal. "The love of friendship," says St. Thomas, "seeks to procure the good of the person

[27] Matt. vi. 3.

that is loved. Thus, when that love is ardent, it makes man exert himself in opposition to whatever may be detrimental to the welfare of his friend; therefore, one is said to have zeal for the one he loves, if he strives to repel whatever is said and done contrary to his friend's good. Likewise, a man is said to have zeal for God, when he strives as much as lies in his power, to repel whatsoever is contrary to the honor and will of God, according to the words of the Gospel: "The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up." [28]

It is of this zeal that St. Augustine speaks, when he says: "May every Christian, a member of Jesus Christ, be devoured by that zeal of the house of God! And whom doth that zeal devour? Him who endeavors to correct, to stop the abuses he sees—and for that end spares himself no effort—as well as him, who not being able to stop the evils, laments over it and endures it." [29] It is with this zeal the Apostle was filled when he exclaimed: "Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is scandalized and I am not on fire?" [30] It is this zeal which has called and still calls thousands of missionaries from their friends, relatives and country to evangelize the unbelievers and infidels amidst trials and tribulations in foreign lands, whilst they expose themselves to all kinds of dangers and brave death itself, mindful of the words of the Savior: "He that loveth father and mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me." [31]

(d) Love of contrition. The love of contrition consists in the sorrow one feels at the sight of his sins and of the sins of others committed through the whole world, because all sin is an offense against the Divine Majesty. This love necessarily accompanies the love of benevolence, for he that loves tenderly and with zeal and procures as far as he can all that is pleasing to the object of his love, bewails also all the evil that has come to him, since he feels himself in duty bound to repel all that is opposed to the welfare of him whom he loves; and when sorrow afflicts his friend, he sympathizes with him in his loss or misfortune. If we now apply this love of friendship and benevolence to God, who cannot see that he who loves God more than all created

[28] John ii. 17; St. Thomas, 1. 2. q. 28 a. 4. [29] Tract. 10 in Joan.
[30] 2 Cor. xi. 29. [31] Matt. x. 37.

things, will bemoan the only evil that deserves the name, and above all mortal sin, the evil that outrages God's majesty, despises His goodness and defies His justice. St. Thomas calls the sorrow which we feel for our sins interior penitence. "Interior penitence," says he, "is that by which we repent for having sinned: it must last until death, for it is necessary that man should always be sorry for having offended God." [32] Imbued with this sentiment David cried out: "Wash me yet more from my iniquity, for I know my iniquity and my sin is always before me.... A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit: a contrite and humble heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." [33]

This penitence should extend even to the sins of others, yea to the sins of all men that ever lived, for since sin is an insult to the Divine Majesty, an evil greater than all deplorable afflictions and misfortunes that have ever fallen to the lot of man, the tears of all men could not blot out the stain of one mortal sin, were it not that the Son of God Himself, by the infinite merits of His passion, has already satisfied the justice of His Father for all man's iniquities. Thus we find in the lives of the saints many examples of self-sacrifice, through which they hoped by most sincere penances and afflictions to repay, as far as man is able, the God of all goodness for all the insults and ignominies He has endured from sinners. Witness St. Teresa who preferred to die than to live without suffering. Her motto was: To suffer or die, and St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi who desired to live, but only to be able to suffer. With this end in view we should often offer up to the eternal Father the spotless Lamb, His only begotten Son in sacrifice; for from it He receives more glory than He ever lost through all the sins of a guilty race.

[32] Part 3. q. 84 a. 8. [33] Ps. Miserere.

CHAPTER II

Conformity to the Will of God

Summary: I. In What Conformity to God's Will Consists—Its Excellence—II. Two Ways By Which God Manifests His Will: One By His Commandments and the Second By His Providence in Shaping All the Events of Our Lives—All That Happens Upon Earth is Either the Inevitable Consequence of Physical Laws or it Depends upon the Free-will of God or of His Rational Creatures—Some Effects of the Physical Laws May Be Detrimental to the Temporal Interests of Man and Then They Should be Considered as Punishments Meted Out to Adam and His Posterity—Sin is the Only Moral Evil in the World—God Cannot Be the Author of Sin, But He Permits It to Punish the Evildoer and to Reward the Just Who Endure Evil With Patience—III. Motives for Conformity: 1. God, Being Our Creator, Can Dispose at Will of His works—2. He is Our Redeemer and Bought us from Slavery—By Right He is Our Master and We His Slaves—3. Conformity is Imposed as a Debt of Gratitude, By Which we Repay Our Lord for His Friendship and Liberality Bestowed Upon us—4. Our Spiritual Welfare Demands from us Perfect Conformity: (a) The Greater Our Holiness, the Greater Our Reward Will Be; (b) As But Few of Our Daily Occupations are Essentially Holy, We Should Sanctify Our Ordinary Actions; (c) Conformity Tends to the Happiness of Man Even in This Life; (d) Sufferings Are a Means Offered us to Satisfy for Our Sins and They Lead to Eminent Sanctity, if we Endure Them with Perfect Resignation.

I. Conformity to God's holy will might be considered as a fifth means by which we can acquire, preserve, and increase perfect charity within us; but it is more than a means, it is charity practiced in our thoughts, affections, desires, words and actions, for it consists in subjecting always and everywhere our whole being with all its endowments and energies to the will of God. Taken in its true and obvious sense, conformity contains all the other acts we have explained in the preceding chapter, for he that knows no other will than the will of God and chooses that holy

will as the rule of all the interior and exterior acts of his life, necessarily rejoices in God's infinite amiability, esteems Him more than the whole creation, wishes Him all the good He desires for Himself and detests sin and grieves over it, because it offends his heavenly Father, whom he loves above all things; but these four acts, called love and complacency, love of preference, love of benevolence, and love of contrition were considered mainly as judgments of the mind and as affections of the heart, and if these constant and loving dispositions and sentiments find expression in our daily actions, it is called conformity to God's holy will. Thus, true conformity puts in practice the sentiments and affections of the soul, which prompted all the acts of charity already considered, and these, as we have seen, are inseparable from intimate friendship between God and man, because "Conformity of likes and dislikes is the most solid foundation of all friendship." [1]

Conformity to the will of God is based on the four acts of charity above explained, because without the firm conviction that God is infinitely perfect and worthy of all our love and admiration, no one would completely become attached to Him, renounce his own will and seek in all things the Divine Will: but perfect conformity, although based upon the four acts of charity, reacts upon them, quickens and fortifies them, as it preserves and perfects the virtue of charity, which soon would be lost, unless one's exterior acts correspond to the interior sentiments of his soul.

From this explanation regarding the nature of conformity to the Divine Will, its excellence becomes apparent. Now, the Divine Will is mainly communicated to us through God's Commandments, for "he who loves Me," says Our Savior, "keeps My commandments," and "The law of God shall be his constant meditation," [2] "He shall be filled with the Lord and will keep the Lord's way," [3] in the full consciousness that "He who keeps His word, in him in very deed the charity of God is perfected." [4]

II. Every Christian must admit that the will of God should be the norm and rule of all our judgments, of our

[1] St. Jerome, *Ep. Ad Demet.*
[2] Eccli. ii. 18.
[3] Ps. i. 2.
[4] 1 John ii. 18.

volitions and of all our actions, but the will of God is not always manifested in the same manner. When He speaks, He must be heard with the entire subjection of our whole being. If He teaches us any truth—even if it contains mysteries surpassing the intelligence of men and angels—He rightfully requires the submission of our intellect and will, and when He commands, as dutiful children we must obey promptly and joyfully, by avoiding what He forbids and by executing with alacrity what He demands of us, irrespective of the sanction of reward or punishment; for Christian devotion demands promptitude of the will and gladness of the heart in the service of God, with a certain admiration of the excellence of His laws and with the simplicity of a child in their observance.

Perfect charity does not forbid the taking into consideration of a temporal or eternal reward, promised by God to His faithful children, nor of the chastisements, which sooner or later follow the infraction of His laws; but our obedience should not depend on them, for if there were no sanction to the law of God, His Commandments would not be less binding on our consciences.

Another manifestation of God's will is found in the many ways His providence directs all the events of greater or less importance that occur in our lives. Unless we are fully convinced that not a hair fails from our head, except when God wills or permits it for a purpose known to Himself alone, we have not yet learned what His foresight and providence mean.

All that happens in the created world is either the effect of irresponsible causes or of the free-will of God or of His rational creatures. There is no room for chance in the visible universe. The so-called fortuitous occurrences are the necessary effects of the natural causes that produce them. The effects of natural causes produce in their turn new effects and the endless succession of causes and their effects are but the inevitable results of the wise laws which the Creator imposed from the beginning on all existing physical beings. As God is the Author of nature, whatever happens in the physical world was foreseen and pre-ordained by Him from all eternity, and devastating hurricanes, cyclones,

scorching heats, droughts, frosts, torrential rains, earthquakes, thunder and lightning, etc., are not more accidental than the regular successions of light and darkness, of the seasons of the year, of the eclipses of the sun and of the moon or of other occurrences which are but the natural effects of well known physical laws. All such and similar events are said to be the effects of necessary causes, because they nowise depend upon the will of rational creatures as free agents, but are manifestations of the laws imposed by God on irrational creatures.

Natural events may be beneficial or detrimental to the material interest of man, but as God is the Author of physical nature, he who complains of the so-called evil effects of nature's laws, rebels against his God to whom he owes his existence and all that he is or has.

God may indeed miraculously suspend the laws of nature, either to punish sin or to reward virtue, or to manifest His will to His children upon earth or to obtain any other result which His wisdom has dictated, but whatever may occur whether in a natural or supernatural manner, we should never swerve from the steadfast conviction that all events of whatever nature in the physical world are the effects of His omnipotent will.

As the effects of necessary causes, such as devastating floods, hurricanes, protracted droughts, pestilences, famine, and similar scourges, are usually detrimental to the temporal welfare of man, we should consider them as punishments from God when He cursed the earth; and hence, they are only willed by God in view of Adam's sin and of the iniquities of his descendants. We call them evil, but although physical evils they are not moral evils. There is but one evil that rightly deserves the name and that is sin, because it alone is detrimental to our eternal welfare. Whatever other misfortunes or calamities may befall us, they cannot properly be called evils, for, if they are borne with patience and resignation to the will of God, they become fruitful of an eternal reward. A true Christian sees in all the untold events of this life but the supreme will of his heavenly Father, who deals mercifully with His children upon earth and often chastises them to free them from the

more severe penalties which their sins have deserved. With this conviction deeply rooted in our souls, we can easily borrow the sentiments of the Royal Prophet, when he cried out to his God: "Thy rod and Thy staff have comforted me, for though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me." [5]

We must judge differently of the effects which have their source in the will of a free agent other than God. Free-agents are usually called free-causes, because they have the use of a free-will: such are angels, man and demons. Of angels we need not make any further mention in connection with the subject of free-causes, for they always execute the will of their divine Master. As the acts of men and demons may be purposely malicious or prove injurious to our temporal interests, how far can they be attributed to God as willed by Him! It is evident that God cannot directly will what is sinful in the same manner as when He commands or counsels all good and holy actions. All virtuous thoughts, desires and acts of any and all rational beings are directly willed by God, but He tolerates sinful or evil actions, and He may also directly will the effects resulting from them to chastise the evil-doers, whom he desires to correct by humilitations and sufferings and thereby to save them from the greater punishments they had incurred. It is in this sense that we must understand David's reply to Abisai, who had intimated that he would forthwith cut off the head of Semei, one of Saul's kindred, who was cursing the fugitive king. "Let him alone," David said, "and let him curse; for the Lord hath made him curse David and who is he that shall dare say: Why hath He done so?" [6] The just God could not be the direct cause of Semei's sin, but he willed King David's affliction to punish him for the offenses of his life against the Divine Majesty, and to bring back to his mind the sad recollection of his ingratitude and the necessity of expiating his sin, by suffering with patience and entire resignation the humiliation of being reviled by one of his subjects. It is in this light that we must regard the injustices and insults that come to us from the ill-will of our enemies and see in them God's merciful designs for

[5] Ps. xxii. 4. [6] 2 Kings xvi. 10.

our amendment and perfection; hence, even with regard to evil deeds unjustly inflicted, whether by demons or ungodly men, conformity to the will of God will forever remain a Christian duty.

III. There are several motives which should spur us on to conform our will to the will of our heavenly Father and it behooves us to consider attentively those that originate in our relationship to God as our Creator and as our Redeemer.

1. The dominion of God over all created things is essentially absolute. Among men a two-fold right of ownership is recognized by all civilized people: one of production by our own labor and the other of purchase or gift. A painter has the exclusive dominion over his canvass, to which he gave, as it were, life and motion; likewise a sculptor is sole master of the inspiring and soul-stirring statue, which his genius has conceived and his skill has fashioned, and the same may be said of the potter or other craftsman who displays much skill and dexterity in his work and of an inventor, who also has the sole right to the fruit of his painstaking and persevering efforts. Paintings, statues, inventions and similar works of genius or skill are the products of a creative mind and their successful producers have the right to dispose of the labor of their mind by sale or donation.

With far greater reason can our bounteous God, the Creator of the universe, dispose of all created things, according to His good pleasure. The painter cannot lay absolute claim to the material of which his canvas was made, for God grew it for him; the sculptor needs the block of marble, which he found in the bowels of the earth; the potter would be hindered from starting his work without the ready-made clay, and the very fire he uses to bake the fashioned clay, is a gift of the Almighty; and the inventor needs different materials for his working models. God created the world without any pre-existing matter and therefore His dominion over the works of His hands is supreme and absolute.

After God had made Job wealthy and honored, he allowed Satan to deprive him of all that was most dear to him, not excepting his bodily comfort and his health, and

who would dare say that God could not dispose at will of His gifts? God promised to Abraham and to his posterity the land later called Canaan or Palestine; several ungodly tribes took possession of the promised land, when Jacob and his sons lived in Egypt, and when God called back the descendants of Jacob from the slavery under the cruel yoke of the Pharaohs, with the order of exterminating all those that opposed them, who shall dare complain or intimate that God's decrees were unjust?

All inanimate creation, all living plants and brute animals hear the voice of God and obey Him, shall man alone resist His commands? God has made man and has endowed him with faculties far more excellent than those of His other creatures on earth; He made the physical world and all it contains for man's use and enjoyment,[7] and how can we explain the wickedness of them who disregard His laws, find fault with His providence or use the Creator's gifts as if they were absolute masters of His sovereign domain?

2. God is not only our Creator but also our Redeemer. Through the sin of our first parents, we became the slaves of hell, of our evil inclinations and of our corrupted nature, incapable of one single meritorious act and powerless to free ourselves from the chains human hands had forged. The Son of God, moved through pity for our sad condition, determined to redeem us from the dreadful bondage under which the human race groaned and He condescended to pay the ransom for our liberty. We know what it cost our Redeemer to accomplish the task during His infancy, His youth and His manhood, and how He labored and suffered in striving to instill the doctrine of salvation into the hearts of the people; and what was the price He paid to redeem us! He alone who has bought us can comprehend the sacrifice He made of His honor, of His liberty, of His body, of His soul and of His Life. Words cannot express, nor can mind conceive the incomprehensible love which He manifested in His passion and death, for "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down His life for His friend."[8] One drop of His sacred blood would have saved a thousand worlds, but His incomprehensible love for man constrained

[7] Isaias xxvi. 1. [8] John xv. 13.

Him to drain all His veins of the life-giving flow and to shed the last drop of His most precious blood to free us from the state of damnation and to purchase for us the freedom of God's children. From slaves of Satan we have been made through the Redemption the adopted sons of our Father in heaven, "And if sons heirs also, heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ." [9] Oh! Who can fathom the depth of God's love for His sinful creatures in their miserable condition, brought about by their sins; "For God so loved the world, as to give His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting." [10] Eternity alone will be sufficiently long fully to appreciate the debt of gratitude, which man has contracted toward his Creator and Redeemer, and to free him from all his obligations, whilst the glory that surrounds the sacred wounds of Our Lord, at the right hand of His Father in heaven, is alone sufficiently potent to repay the Blessed Trinity for the indignities and sufferings inflicted on Christ our Savior by the cruelty, indifference and ingratitude of a guilty race.

When we consider attentively the price of infinite value, with which Our Savior paid the ransom of our delivery from a galling slavery, we can come to only one conclusion: if Jesus redeemed us by shedding the last drop of His precious blood, we become by all the titles of right and justice the slaves of His Father, for whom He bought us; but as He nowise desires to exact from us a servile obedience, and only requires the filial subjection of our intellect and will, we owe Him a free but entire conformity of all our thoughts, desires, words and actions to the will of Him who rightfully possesses an absolute dominion over all the powers and faculties of our souls and of our bodies. May the following prayer be often on our lips: O Lord of heaven and earth, make me thy willing, humble, reverential and devoted slave all the days of my life.

3. There are other reasons why we should subject ourselves entirely and with perfect conformity to the will of God, such as the gratitude we owe Him for the numerous favors His goodness and liberality bestow daily upon us

[9] Rom. viii. 17. [10] John iii. 16.

and upon all His helpless children upon earth; for there is nothing more vile among men than ingratitude and the greater the excellence and the number of the benefits already received, the more detestable and base the conduct of the ungrateful wretch appears. Let us recount in general, as far as it is possible, the innumerable graces and temporal blessings we owe to our heavenly Father's munificence: was there one instant in our lives void of new benefits and is there one moment of our existence which does not demand our hearty and grateful sentiments of sincere devotion toward the Giver of all good gifts?

We are also the children of our Father who is in heaven, and as He is the best of fathers, do we not owe Him the most filial submission? Is it not proper and just that we prove our devotedness to Him by a prompt and cheerful obedience to the least of His desires? How can we oppose our Father's designs upon us, when we are assured that whatever befalls us is but a new evidence of His kindness and generosity? If we have sinned we are invited to the throne of mercy, for He who calls us to repentance is not an inexorable judge, but a tender Father with a tender heart and He never turns a deaf ear to the voice of the penitent yet prodigal son; if we are overwhelmed by temptations, let us call upon Him with a childlike confidence and He will send strength and fortitude proportionate to the violence of the attacks; if we suffer, let us appeal to Him and He will console us and His sweet embrace will well repay us for our afflictions; if we are weak, He is our tower of strength; if we are in doubt, He will guide us; if we are in danger, He will protect us, and in all our necessities He will succor us, provided we put our whole trust in Him; for a Father so good cannot deny a praiseworthy request to them whom He has called to reign with Himself in His kingdom and to participate, as co-heirs with His Son Jesus, in His boundless wealth.

God is also our friend, for we become friends of God by the bond of charity, which unites us to Him in the most intimate friendship, and as the best of friends, He is willing, yea eager to share His riches with His friends. "I will not call you servants," Jesus said, "but I have called you

friends." [11] We should nevertheless bear in mind that friendship cannot endure without a reciprocity of love and gifts. The more we love, the more we shall be loved in return. God is infinitely rich and we cannot add to His unlimited wealth, but we can give what we have, that is, our understanding and our will, and all that we are, and this God demands of us in return for His disinterested friendliness. By conforming our thoughts, the sentiments of our hearts, and all our actions to His holy will, we give all that we can give. The regret that because of our indigence we cannot give more, will be acceptable in lieu of what we would give, if we had the whole world at our feet and if we could dispose of the hearts of all living men. Finally, our good God will repay well the little sacrifices and affectionate attentions that social people in the world know so well to bestow upon their acquaintances with whom they maintain friendly relations.

4. One of the most important of all the sacred duties of a Christian is the obligation of tending to perfection, that is, towards holiness or the sanctification of his soul, because greater holiness obtains in return, in this life, more abundant graces from God, and an increase of glory in the next; now, as we intend to show that sincere and constant conformity to the will of God greatly promotes and assures our sanctification, it is proper that each one of us should learn how to arrive at a high degree of holiness by the practice of that conformity.

(a) In the first chapter of this Manual we learned in what perfection consists and from that knowledge we deduced the obligation of tending towards it. Our own interests demand also that we should strive constantly for holiness, for the holier we are at the moment of our death, the greater will be our happiness during an endless eternity. "In My Father's house," Jesus said to His Apostles, "there are many mansions." [12] Therefore it behooves each one of us to contend for the greatest felicity in store for us through the munificence of our heavenly Father, maintaining meanwhile the full confidence "That to them that love God, all things work together unto good." [13] Although

[11] John xv. 15. [12] John xiv. 21. [13] Rom. viii. 28.

there will be an inequality among the elect, no one will envy the greater happiness of another, since he cannot covet a state of perfection and blessedness which surpasses his nature and for which he has no aptitude; and thus, inequality, as explained by St. Thomas,[14] is not the cause of envy, which only exists when one has it in his power to become equal or to be preferred to another.

How few Christians apply to themselves the saying of Our Lord: "For he that hath, to him shall be given and he shall abound; but he that hath not, from him shall be taken away that also that he hath." These words of Our Lord, spoken in explanation of the sower's seed, are applicable to grace or to any other heavenly gift tending to our holiness. The sense is: if you have received abundant graces from God and great opportunities to advance in holiness, much more shall be given you, if you utilize them for the sanctification of your soul; but if you have received but little, multiply that little by your assiduity to duty, for otherwise the little you have will be taken from you. The parable of the talents further explains our Savior's meaning. If you have received five, four or two talents, endeavor to make them yield a fruit proportionate to the first gift, but, if after a short trial, God finds that you have neglected the use of the talent confided to your care, He will take it from you and give it to another. The two parables as explained by Our Lord find also their verification and application in the doctrine of the Communion of saints. Every Christian in the state of grace participates in all the good works, prayers, and sacrifices in the Church, but he that abounds already in grace, and therefore is the better disposed, has a greater share in their fruits than the lukewarm, careless or indifferent Catholic. What an incentive to greater efforts in order to abound more and more in the grace of God and to become more intimately united to Him by an absolute conformity to His holy will! What will I, O Lord, but what Thou wilt?

(b) In our lives but few actions tend directly toward our sanctification and can be regarded as essentially holy. The care of the body and of temporalities, at least for the

[14] 2. 2. q. 36 a. 1 to 2, 3.

largest number of people, is man's principal concern and solicitude, and but little attention is paid to the eternal welfare of the soul; yea, even priests and religious with few exceptions, busy themselves more with temporal than with strictly spiritual matters. Sleep, eating and drinking, recreation, visits of necessity, of propriety or of usefulness, or other occupations, such as teaching and the care of the sick, leave at most but a few hours of the day, even to the most piously inclined, for their sanctification. How important then that every sincere Christian should sanctity his ordinary and most insignificant occupations and duties! How can that be done? The rule is simplicity itself: seek in all things the will of God and conform to it always and everywhere.

First of all we should scrupulously avoid even the semblance of sin and lose no time in "Foolish talking and scurrility which is to no purpose." [15] We should undertake nothing whatsoever until we are fully convinced that the object and aim of our new project will be acceptable to God. With that end in view we should choose what we consider most pleasing to our heavenly Father, not only as to the work itself, but also as to the manner of executing it; and whilst we perform a task of our choice or one imposed upon us as a duty, we should never entirely forget the presence of God, for the thought that He sees us and watches every affection of our heart and every movement of our body, will stimulate us to perform the humblest actions with the best intention and in the most perfect manner. Thus we will follow the Apostle's advice: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God," [16] or in other words, do all things with the intention of conforming yourselves to His holy will. If we follow that golden rule nothing is lost: our sleep, our repast, our ordinary occupations and our recreations all become meritorious of eternal life. What a consolation for those pious souls who are troubled in mind, because their many occupations prevent them from giving more time to meditation, spiritual reading and prayer, and regret above all that they are deprived of hearing Mass and of receiving

[15] Eph. v. 4. [16] 1 Cor. x. 31.

Holy Communion daily! They should find comfort in the firm trust that their application to duty and their desire of accomplishing in all things the holy will of God, will stand them in lieu of the holy exercises of which they are deprived, and that they cannot perform a work that honors God more and is more meritorious than to comply with their obligations with the view of obeying and pleasing Him.

(c) Conformity to God's holy will not only tends to our eternal welfare, but contributes greatly to our happiness in all the circumstances of our life, and therefore we should prize it above all temporal advantages. Happy the man whose desires are fulfilled and who joyfully accepts the future with all that it will bring, because he feels that all future events are foreseen and willed by God. Buddhism has excogitated a state of perfection that consists in having no needs and no desires, and when its adherents have arrived at that state, in which they neither suffer from hunger nor thirst, neither from cold nor heat, and are entirely free from the passions of the soul and from the sensual appetites, they have then arrived at the perfect state and are placed among the gods. It is easily seen that the aim and hope of the Buddhist is futile. As long as we sojourn on earth, the necessities of the body demand attention and the soul's life is made up of a succession of emotions, of attractions or of aversions, of love or of hatred, which sound reason must guide and control. Buddhism as well as quietism in all its shades of error, are totally different from that Christian contentment, quietude and interior peace, to which a follower of Christ should aspire and which is the fruit of an entire abandonment of one's self to Divine Providence. Man cannot remain inactive; his duties vary with circumstances, but the true Christian remains always peaceful and resigned as well as contented and happy in the midst of the most severe trials, adversities and sufferings, because he wills them as sent by God. "Whatsoever shall befall a just man," says the Holy Ghost, "it shall not make him sad."[17] He is never disappointed, because he has no desire different from what has occurred or will occur, unless it happen through his negligence and then he regrets and deplores his

[17] Prov. xii. 21.

fault, because he is conscious of his imperfections and of his sinful nature. "Perfect peace," says St. Augustine, "consists in that there is nothing in us to make resistance, and thus God's children are peaceful because nothing in them resists the Divine Will."[18] The results may not always conform to the expectations and good intentions of the disciple of Christ, but even then he feels no cause for disappointment and he loses nowise his peace of mind, for he ascribes his failure to his unworthiness or sees in it a just punishment of his sins. This conviction that whatever happens is intended by God as a correction for one's amendment, removes the least temptation of sadness, and one's past sins and present imperfections alone cause heart-felt sorrow; but it is a sorrow tempered by the sweet consolation that God never despises a contrite and humble heart, besides who is ignorant of the consoling truth that our good God does not always chastise in anger: He has often our greater perfection for end. It is indeed salutary if we see in all untoward events a well-deserved punishment for our sins or God's designs for our amendment, but there are many examples in the lives of the saints which prove beyond any doubt that our benign Father often solely intends the greater perfection of His elect and an increase of merit through a closer union between man and his God.

God's design of correction is clearly set forth in the book of Machabees. After a detailed account of the afflictions which befell the Jewish nation during the persecution of Antiochus, the sacred writer adds: "Now, I beseech those that shall read this book that they be not shocked at these calamities, but that they consider the things that happen, not as being for the destruction but for the correction of our nation."[19] The same doctrine is set forth by Judith in her exhortation to the inhabitants of Bethulia, when they were on the point of delivering their city to Holophernes.[20]

The lives of the saints of the Old and of the New Testament also clearly teach us that God frequently employs afflictions to raise the souls of His elect to eminent holiness. Our Savior Himself wished to serve as an example to future generations of the necessity of trials and tribulations to test

[18] *Lib.* 1 *Ser. Dom.*, c. 2. [19] 2 Mach. vi. 12. [20] Judith viii. 27.

the devotion of His faithful followers. What aridity, more painful than all the wounds that covered our Savior's sacred body, must have nearly overwhelmed Him, when He hung bleeding on the Cross and cried out: "My God, My God, why hast Thou abandoned Me?" Heavenly consolations are useful to keep ordinary Christians in the path of virtue, but aridities, tribulations and sufferings are as many sacred ordeals through which God's saints pass to an eminent degree of sanctity and by which the disciples of our meek Savior become like their Model, the "Man of Sorrows."

We should then throw aside all unnecessary cares and anxieties, for we are in the hands of God and no harm can befall us, unless we seek it; should adversity be our lot, we are assured that it must ultimately tend to our good, as our infinitely good God hath willed it and He can but will the end for which He placed us on earth, our eternal happiness with Him in His kingdom. Above all, the fear of attracting upon ourselves real evil and the displeasure of our heavenly Father, should restrain every Christian from complaining against God's providence. Let any and all remember that no pains of body or soul, no afflictions however severe can happen to them, which the heavenly Father has not imposed in a greater measure upon His well-beloved Son for their sakes, that is, to sanctify their own sufferings and to make them meritorious of eternal reward; and can it be possible that any Christian, man or woman, could fail to be resigned to the will of God in the midst of adversities and renounce through pusillanimity a reward for which the Savior died?

(d) There is still one more capital reason why we should look upon sufferings, not as an evil but as a favor of God's merciful affection for His guilty children upon earth. If we remember that afflictions of every kind are a means of satisfying for the debt contracted through our sins, is it a wonder that the saints have earnestly desired and implored their blessed Lord not to deny them the opportunity of meriting and of satisfying for their daily imperfections by trials and sufferings? Our Christian doctrine has taught us that nothing defiled can enter heaven and that, if we owe the just God any debt, either because of

mortal sins, of which the eternal but not the temporal punishment has been remitted, or because of venial sins which have not been fully condoned, complete satisfaction must be given to the all-holy God, either here or in Purgatory. Now, here on earth, we can call upon the merits of Jesus Christ to make our good works meritorious and available as an offset against our debts, but in Purgatory, this is no longer acceptable and the whole debt must be paid by an equivalent of personal sufferings, unless the merits of friends upon earth or the prayers of the Church pay the debt; for Mercy ceases with our death and Justice demands full retribution.

Moreover, as long as we have not fully satisfied the justice of God for our sins, our good works are less meritorious than when we are free from all indebtedness; for although we must accept the doctrine that the holier the deed, the greater the reward will be, it is also an undeniable truth that the same virtuous act has different degrees of holiness proportionate to the sanctity of the actor, for the holier the doer, the holier the action and the greater its merit. Thus all the merits of the Savior were of infinite value and those of the Blessed Virgin far exceeded the merits of the greatest saints. This is not applicable to those who act in the name of the Church or in the name of Christ, like a priest when he administers the sacraments or conducts the ordinary services of the Church, for the prayers and ceremonies of the sacraments, or of the liturgy, or ritual derive their efficacy from the institution of Christ and of His Church independently of the dispositions of the ministers.

Through tribulations we are tried like gold in a furnace: they purify the soul from earthly dross, that is, from its imperfections and negligences: "Because thou wert acceptable to God," said the Angel Raphael to Tobias, "it was necessary that temptation (afflictions) should prove thee." [21] From this we learn that sufferings and tribulations, when borne with patience and resignation to the will of God, render the friends of God more acceptable and dearer to Him, and this conclusion is the more convincing, because the most

[21] Tob. xii. 13.

eminent saints have been the greatest sufferers; and rightly so, because sufferings make a Christian more like his Model Jesus, whose life we should all closely imitate.

Who after her Son was more eminent in holiness than Mary? Her whole life from the day she heard the prophetic words of the saintly Simeon: "Behold this Child (Jesus thy Son) is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel....and thy own soul a sword shall pierce," [22] was but a continual martyrdom. She is styled the Mother of martyrs and the saints have attributed to her a participation in our redemption. St. Joseph, the Patriarch of the whole Church, shared with her for thirty years her sorrows. Next come the Apostles, who rejoiced in their sufferings, and the many thousands of Christian martyrs, who like the Apostles, gladly laid down their lives for the faith, and finally the glorious phalanx of saints, martyrs in desire if not in deed, who preferred sufferings to pleasure and comforts, to be more like their Master; and notwithstanding we find Christians who murmur against Divine Providence when the least misfortune befalls them.

If there is one mong us who lacks the fortitude of desiring humiliations and afflictions, and is too lukewarm or pusillanimous to earnestly beg them of God, as a special favor, that he may become like his Model, let him at least bear patiently the afflictions which a merciful Father sends him, that he may not be deprived of the opportunity of satisfying for his sins, of increasing his merits for heaven and of securing, through resignation to God's holy will, peace and tranquillity here on earth and an endless glory hereafter.

[22] Luke ii. 34.

CHAPTER III

Additional Instructions on Conformity to the Divine Will

I. To Acquire Perfection, Conformity to God's Holy Will, Wherever It Manifests Itself, Is Necessary—God Manifests His Will in All the Events of Our Lives—God Wills the Natural Effects of the Laws that Govern the Universe—He Can Suspend At Will All Physical Laws, and Innumerable Events in the World Are Willed By God in View of Man's Actions—II. All Things that Occur Are Willed or Permitted By God and Although He Cannot Will Man's Sin, He May Will the Consequence of a Sinful Deed to Fall Upon the Guilty He Wishes to Chastise or Upon the Just He Wishes to Try—III. Conformity Is Based on an Ardent Love of God—To acquire It We Must: 1. Subdue the Evil Inclinations of the Senses and of Our Intellectual Appetites—2. We Must Practice Conformity In All Our Daily Actions—3. The Greatest Sacrifice We Can Make is the Sacrifice of Our Will or of Our Self-love and God Demands It of Us—4. Perfect Resignation to God's Holy Will in Trials and Tribulations Is Also Required and It Brings to the Soul Equanimity of Mind and Peace to the Heart; Thus Our Passions Are Conquered or directed Into Their Proper Channels and Enslaved In the Service of God—5. This Perfect Subjection of the Passions Leads to the Perfection of the State of Innocence In Which Adam Was Created, as far as it is Possible After Adam's Sin—6. Equanimity of Mind and Peace of Heart Engender In the Soul a Holy Indifference to All That Is Not God or Tends Not to God—7. The Soul Is Thereby Disposed to Listen Attentively to the Divine Inspirations, Sources of Numberless Spiritual Favors.

I. Perfection is not possible without conformity to the will of God in all our thoughts, desires, words and actions; for, as has been explained, perfection is nothing else than perfect charity or the perfect love of God. He who loves God keeps His Commandments, and this much is necessary unto salvation; but he who desires to be perfect must do more than save his soul from hell: he must also follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and

obedience, as far as his state of life will permit. "If thou wish to be perfect," said Our Lord, "go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor....and come follow Me."[1] To acquire true and solid perfection, the will of God must be fulfilled wherever it manifests itself: in His commandments and in the precepts of His Church, in His counsels, in the orders of superiors whether civil or ecclesiastical, in the rules of religious orders or congregations to which one belongs, or in the constitutions and by-laws of any lawful society to which one is affiliated, and finally in all the events and occurences of one's life or that happen in the world, with the exception of sin which God cannot will.

The last named truth that the will of God is manifest in all that happens in the world, demands full and entire acceptance on the part of those who earnestly desire to become perfect.

We must necessarily accept, as an undeniable truth, that God from all eternity determined to create the world with all it contains for man's habitation, with the whole universe for his welfare and enjoyment. He created man as well as the angels for a supernatural destiny, but He also willed that they should merit their destiny and therefore endowed them with intellect to understand their duties and with free will to serve Him, as He directed in the natural law or in the subequent manifestations of His holy will. Infinite Wisdom foresaw all the possible consequences of His creative work, and as He foreknew the conduct of each rational being in particular, He determined also how to meet the disobedience of one and the faithfulness of another. This determination regards nations and society at large as well as individual persons.

Although God has determined from before all ages the laws that should govern the universe and all irrational beings therein, we should not assume that He should not suspend those laws whenever He chooses, and therefore we may conclude that many occurrences, apparently derogatory to the physical stability of things, depend on the actions of man. Thus the deluge, the destruction of Sodom and of the neighboring cities, the earthquake and utter darkness that

[1] Matt. xix. 21.

came upon the world at the death of the God of nature on Cavalry, the extraordinary signs that preceded the destruction of the temple and city of Jerusalem, without mentioning less remarkable events, prove sufficiently that there is no law of nature which God is bound to maintain. Therefore not all the strange events, which we witness now and then, are the necessary consequences of the laws of nature established at the birth of the world, but are willed by the all-wise Creator for ends known to Him alone. What we say of manifestation of God's almighty power on nature is equally true of nations and of their governments, of the reigning dynasties and of all that happens in the private and public life of every descendant of Adam and Eve. Had Adam and Eve not sinned, this earth would now be a paradise; had moral corruption not spread over the whole earth, there would have been no deluge; had Saul destroyed Amalec and all his possessions, David and his descendants would not have been called to the throne in his stead, etc. All this and thousands of other occurrences in the history of mankind are clearly attributed in Holy Scripture to the good or bad actions of man, as a single person or as forming part of a community, city or nation. Shall we judge from these premises that God changes His mind? Far from it: God has foreseen from all eternity what each rational being upon earth would do at a certain moment, and from all eternity He had determined upon everything, whether material or spiritual, that will occur until the end of time, in view of His foreknowledge of man's conduct.

If anyone should object that it does not behoove an all-wise Being to be swayed by the acts of His creatures, I will answer that the salvation of one soul is more dear to Him than the material existence of all irrational creatures in the whole universe. Know then that not a hair falls from your head except your heavenly Father wills it and not a leaf is detached from a tree that He does not direct its descent. Nothing will ever happen but God has so determined it, ages before the world was created. Nevertheless, He has not necessarily fore-ordained all the events, great or little, absolutely without reference to man's conduct, but foreseeing the actions of every man at every instant of his life, He

has resolved to meet man's doings in a way unknown or unsuspected by us, He is moved thereto solely by His infinite wisdom. Therefore all occurrences are either absolutely willed by God or were willed in view of the intents or actions of His rational creatures. Who will enumerate the evils of all kinds, of local or world-wide calamities, that have been averted through the prayers of saintly souls unknown to the masses or through the persevering and fervent supplications of a community or of the faithful of a locality or of a whole nation?

There have been deep thinkers, men of wonderful genius and extensive learning who have endeavored to explain the concatenation of events in the public life of nations and peoples, as, for instance, the great Bossuet in his Discourse on Universal History; but they have, as it were, only scratched the surface of the trivial and common events; for who can conceive the impulse of divine Providence in shaping the destiny of one man only in the common walks of life, to say nothing of the acts of the rulers of immense empires and of the chiefs of powerful commonwealths on whose government and decrees the welfare of their subjects depended? When we stand aghast at the contemplation of the ruins of mightly empires and before the rise of a people until then nearly unknown, whose power has extended over the whole civilized world, and when on the other hand, we see the down-trodden and despised of this world raised after their death to the glory of our altars and honored as priviledged and influential friends of the Most High, we are prompted to exclaim with the Apostle: "O the depths of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments and how unsearchable His ways! For who hath known the mind of the Lord and who hath been His counselor?....For of Him and by Him and in Him are all things: to Him be glory for ever. Amen."[2]

II. From the knowledge already acquired and from the explanation laid down here, we must at least conclude that nothing happens in this world that is not permitted by our bountiful Father, and if He allows us to be tempted by

[2] Rom. xi. 33.

Satan for our spiritual advancement, should we not equally be indebted to Him when He tries our constancy through sickness, misfortunes and other calamities, or through the injustice or ill-will and hatred of wicked neighbors? He has determined from all eternity not to paralyze the hand that strikes His servants nor the tongue that reviles them, nor stop the thief that robs them, nor the hurricane that destroys their property, and shall we complain because He has not taken away evil from among men and has not deprived the wicked of their liberty of action? Pious people will see in God's determination not to interfere with the wicked attempts of sinners, the manifestations of His holy will and will say with the holy man Job: "If we have received good things at the hands of God, why should we not receive evil?" [3] Our tranquillity of mind and peace of heart can only be assured, if we see in all things but God and ourselves, and if we regard all untoward occurrences, the evil spirits and the malicious people that torment us, as instruments in the hands of God to try our fidelity; for although the Almighty cannot will the sinners' evil intents, which consist in the knowldge of the evil and the will to execute it, nor their hatred nor their malice, nevertheless He may will that I be persecuted, maligned and reviled and that my property be destroyed or stolen.

It has been often objected and as often refuted that he who wills a result wills the cause inevitably producing it, and he that wills the cause wills it necessary effects, provided the latter be at least foreseen. In our courts of justice it is argued, when a man is accused of murder and is known to have used an instrument capable of inflicting death, such as a loaded pistol, he is held guilty of the intent to kill, even if the injured man survives. Furthermore all moralists agree that one is obliged to prevent an evil and especially an evil that causes injury to a neighbor, provided he do not jeopardize his own interest thereby. If by the objection it be insinuated that it is applicable to God, its falsity is apparent. The Creator of heaven and earth has power over all His creatures, rational of irrational, animate or inert. In His infinite wisdom He has endowed man with freedom of will

[3] Job ii. 11.

and of physical action. He gives to the sinner, thief, murderer or lecher sufficient grace to desist from his crime, and if the latter persist, he must bear the sole responsibility of his act. If God is said by David to have ordered Semei to curse David,[4] this simply means that God willed the Prophet King to be afflicted, as He did not prevent it when He could. The Lord willed that David should be humiliated and punished, and He allowed it to be done by Semei. It is not necessary that God should guide the hand of an assassin or indicate the means of perpetrating the foul deed, if He desires the consequence of a wicked act to fall upon the sinner He wills to chastise or upon the just He desires to try: by not preventing it His holy will is accomplished.

III. Having now fully explained in what we should conform our will to the will of God, we must now endeavor to show the great spiritual advantages of that perfect conformity, but we shall first examine on what that conformity is based and what is indispensable to acquire it in all its perfection.

We have learned in the preceding chapter that conformity to the will of God is based upon an ardent love of Him. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and the love of God is its complement or the highest degree of wisdom. We may observe God's Commandments through fear of Him, but, through fear, we will never seek the Supreme Good in all our thoughts, words and actions. When we love Infinite Goodness affectionately and ardently, we seek It always and everywhere.

I. True and thorough mortification of our senses, and the subduing of our passions must necessarily precede any successful efforts to unite ourselves to God by perfect charity and entire conformity. As long as there is any self-love remaining in us, as long as we have not subdued the evil inclinations of our rebellious flesh and vanquished all opposition from the intellectual appetites of the soul which we call its passions, perfect conformity is illusory, for the unrestrained inclinations will necessarily revolt against whatever opposes them. And let us be reminded again that the combat against the sensual and intellectual appetites must

[4] 2 Kings xvi. 10.

last until our last breath, for their germs remain even when their growth is arrested and they will sprout again, if they are allowed any peace or truce.

When the passions are now kept under restraint and when the perfect love of God and of neighbor has been attained by the constant practice of the virtues and especially of those of our state of life, it requires but little effort to arrive at a state of perfect conformity to God's holy will, and furthermore, the daily practice of this conformity will alone be sufficient to maintain a complete dominion over the evil inclinations of our sinful nature. Thus, that desire of union with God in this world is maintained. He will abide in us and we in Him.

2. There are many occasions during the day in which we will find an opportunity of practicing perfect conformity to our Benefactor's will, yea, we should be convinced that every moment, from the time we open our eyes in the morning until sleep closes them at night, should be spent with the desire of pleasing Him, for: "To them that love God, all things work together unto good, unto such, as according to His purpose, are called to be saints." [5] Nothing can be a surer means of increasing charity in us than the constant desire to seek God in all we think, say or do, and as a consequence, if the love of God is indispensable to pious conformity, the latter constantly increases in us that sublime devotion which, according to St. Francis de Sales, has the same relation to charity as flame to fire.

3. This becomes more evident still, if we bear in mind what we have more than once stated in this Manual, that the greatest sacrifice man can make is the sacrifice of his will. for then he reserves nothing for himself and he only desires what God asks of him. God's will is his will: he sees it before undertaking any new occupations; he follows the Divine Will in the manner of performing and accomplishing it. He scrutinizes his thoughts as well as the aspirations and the emotions of his heart, and he subjects them together with the execution of his pious designs to the will of his Maker, whom he is proud to serve and whose will rejoices his heart exceedingly. If he be religious, he sees in the or-

[5] Rom. viii. 28.

ders of his superior as well as in the rules of his institute the will of Him whom his soul loves ardently and obeys joyfully, and what happiness for him to follow to the letter the wishes of those placed over him, because through them God manifests His desires. Truly such a man offers himself as a holocaust well pleasing in the eyes of his heavenly Father. Formerly he found it troublesome if not irksome, to accept crosses, to be rebuked, to be humbled before others, to be despised, to suffer from hunger and thirst, from sickness and bodily pains, but now since he has preferred the sweet yoke of Christ to all earthly enjoyments, he is indifferent to all things, except where he detects the will of Him, whom he seeks without respite in all things, and the desires of his heart are summed up in his oft-repeated petition: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

It is a golden rule to do rather the will of another than one's own, but the superior who conforms his will to the Divine Will, obeys God in what he commands as well as when he executes the will of another.

St. Bernard has beautifully expressed in a few words the love of God which results from the perfect conformity to the will of God, in the following passage taken from a letter to a postulant: "What is it that God requires of us?" he asks, and he answers his own query: "Our heart can offer nothing more worthy than to give itself back to Him who made it and this God demands of us, when He says: "Son, give Me thy heart." [6] "Then indeed the heart of man is given to God when all its thoughts end in Him, when it gyrates about and turns on Him and desires absolutely nothing else than to possess Him, and to a heart thus attached to Him, all other love becomes bitter. For I would not call it a gift of one's heart to God unless it be enslaved in His service and submit itself entirely to His will and that it will nothing else than what it knows Him to will." [7] What fervent ejaculatory prayers will burst forth from the heart that has been inflamed in the furnace of the Divine Love! Of what heroic sacrifices is he not capable who has been purified in the fire which God has enkindled in his soul! He may exclaim with St. Paul, "I am sure that neither death

[6] Prov. xxiii. 21. [7] *Epist. ad. postul.*

nor life....nor any creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus Our Lord." [8]

4. One of the greatest beneficial effects of conformity to the will of God comes to us through entire and perfect resignation in all the trials that come from the hand of God. Christian resignation is the natural consequence of conformity or it is conformity to God's will in all adversities, tribulations and even in death. Conformity to God's orders, wishes or desires supposes that we freely resign our own will in whatever is agreeable or pleasing to us, if it be in opposition to what God wills, and that we accept without murmuring or complaining what we would otherwise fear or dislike, or what is contrary to our natural inclinations or gives us pain of body and soul. This perfect Christian resignation produces equanimity of mind which consists in that the soul is neither elated by successes nor depressed by adversities, and the second effect of Christian resignation is peace of heart. To understand fully what is meant by peace of heart, we must go back to our explanation of the passions of the soul. Of the eleven passions of the soul, six, we said, belong to the concupiscible appetite: love, hatred, desire, flight, joy and sadness. Through conformity to God's holy will we will love what God loves, that is, God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves, and hate sin which God detests as well as the wicked world, the devil and his ruses; we will desire what is acceptable in the sight of God and flee from sin and from all its occasions; we will rejoice in all things that bring honor and praise to God and we will be sad only when God is offended, but this sadness is coupled with contempt for what gives offense to God and we bemoan our own sins, but sorrow reconciles us to God and the soul loses not its peace thought it, for its sorrow brings the consolation of pardon.

Five passions belong to the irascible appetites in man: hope, despair, fear audacity and anger. The hope of retribution in God's service rejoices the soul; despair cannot belong to them who put their whole confidence in God and that confidence increases their hope, for despair that haunts the soul belongs to the wicked only who mistrust God's in-

[8] Rom. viii. 38.

finite goodness. He that conforms his will to the will of his Maker has no other fear than the fear of offending so good a Father, and all fear that might disquiet the soul is squashed in hope and confidence in His mercy, goodness and promises. Audacity is incompatible with the renunciation of one's will, but the virtue of fortitude, if occasion requires, will replace it, and that is based not on one's own strength, but on the hope of divine assistance, and finally, anger contradicts that perfect resignation to God's wishes and desires, manifested in all the events of little or greater consequence that occur in our lives. Thus we see that when our will is subject to God, the passions are so controlled that no one in particular nor all of them jointly can disquiet or disturb the heart, the seat of the passions, and therefore it rests in peace and with that peace comes contentment or heavenly joy which the world cannot give, but is the fruit of the Holy Ghost bestowed on them only who abdicate all things terrestrial to conform their will to the will of God.

5. But, any one may object that this doctrine pretends to lead us back to the state of innocence in which Adam was created. Precisely, so far as it is humanly possible. If conformity of our will to the will of God be entirely perfect, the passions of the soul will be subject to our reason, that is, to our intellect and will, and reason will be subject to God; but we must bear in mind that the sensual appetites, called also the concupiscence of the flesh, must be subdued and kept under restraint by suitable mortifications; for, as we have often remarked, unsubdued sensual appetites obscure the intellect and weaken the will, the passions of the soul revolt and reason loses its control over the sensual and intellectual appetites; and life is thus spent in obedience to their shameful desires; God is ignored and even denied, for "The fool says in his heart there is no God."[9]

Thus conformity begets resignation and he that sees the will of God in all that happens, whether it comes from natural causes or from the will of rational beings, cannot wish nor desire anything but what befalls him, and therefore, whether the loss of worldly goods, of health, of those dear to him or calamities, scourges or painful accidents be

[9] Ps. xiii. 1.

his lot, he is equally peaceful and contented, always blessing his heavenly Father in all that occurs, with no other wish than that His holy will be done on earth as it is among the blessed in heaven, and when great adversities threaten or are upon him, with placid resignation he prays: Father, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.

6. Equanimity of mind and peace of heart reduce man to a holy state of indifference to all that is not God or does not tend to God. In that state, the privileged soul is like Mary at the feet of Jesus who praised her for having chosen for herself the best part. She was unmindful of all things around her, but earnestly intent on the words of wisdom that fell from her Master's lips. Through them and the contemplation of the heavenly beauty, that shone on His sacred countenance, she drank deep of the exuberant delights, which His presence communicated to her. She hears not the complaint of her sister Martha or if she heard them, they had no other impression upon her than to make her desire more ardently the renewal of the ecstatic joy of which she had been momentarily deprived. Well may she have exclaimed with the Psalmist: "One thing I have asked of the Lord—and this will I seek after—that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life," [10] or have prayed with Queen Esther: "Thou knowest, O Lord, that Thy handmaid has never rejoiced....but in Thee, O Lord the God of Abraham." [11] Martha being too much concerned and troubled about the housework, shared in no way the supernatural consolations which Mary experienced, although the work in which she was engaged, consisted in performing charitable ministrations of hospitality towards her divine Guest. Thus Mary, who was in no wise concerned about temporal matters and much less troubled by them, rested peacefully at the feet of the Savior to listen to the interpretations of the Divine Will, whilst Martha totally engaged in material things, was deprived of the salutary inspirations which accompanied the Savior's discourse.

We may apply this to the effects that absolute indifference to all worldly advantages and daily occurrences pro-

[10] Ps. xxvi. 4. [11] Esther xiv. 18.

duce in the minds and hearts of them who recognize in all that happens in their lives, the will of their Father in heaven and therefore are not troubled more by adversities than by successes. Their minds and hearts, being emptied of useless thoughts and desires, are opened to divine inspirations and the faithful Spouse of their souls loves to communicate His heavenly treasures to them who are entirely detached from all earthly goods and from self-love.

7. Now, what do we understand by divine inspirations? As we speak here of inspirations that have their source in God, they necessarily tend to His honor and glory and to our spiritual welfare. They are heavenly favors that precede any assent or co-operation upon our part, and therefore they are prevenient graces, in which God alone operates independently of any subsequent act from our part, and consequently, they are solely due to His mercy and goodness. [12]

The sun lights whilst warming, and warms while lighting. In the winter nature is still and benumbed, and many animals sleep and plants seem dead; but when spring comes, the bright rays of the sun warm up all living things: the sun dissipates winter's gloom, reanimates all terrestrial beings endowed with life and resuscitates all that seemed dead. Likewise the warm breath of heavenly inspirations enlightens the soul, quickens its faculties by awakening the intellect, invigorates the will and renders man capable of salutary actions and virtuous deeds.

Divine inspirations produce principally two distinct effects upon the soul's noblest faculties, the intellect and the will: they enlighten the former and as neither the subdued passions of the soul nor the conquered desires of the flesh can warp its judgment, the intellect recognizes in the inspirations the good pleasure of God, finds it salutary and transmits its command to the will, which, moved thereto by the same invigorating inspirations, executes promptly what reason has commanded. Thus, he who is always submissive to God's holy will and always resigned and at peace, loses none of the frequent inspirations with which it pleases the good Lord to favor and to enrich him. His ears are always open,

[12] *Cfr.* St. Thomas, 1. 2. q. 111. a. 2, 3.

for he says with David: "I will hear what the Lord will speak in me; for He will speak peace to His people," [13] and how can this soul remain cold and indifferent when she hears the voice of her beloved? Surely, like the spouse of the Canticles, she will melt at the sound of His voice, [14] and in the ecstasy of her overwhelming joy she will exclaim: "Behold my beloved speaketh to me: Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one and come." [15]

[13] Ps. lxxxiv. 9. [14] Cant. v. 6. [15] *Ibid.*, ii. 10.

CHAPTER IV

Love of Neighbor

I. The Love of Neighbor Is Inculcated By God—The Love of God and the Love of Neighbor Are Inseparable—Love Thy Neighbor As Thyself—Love of Neighbor Is a Strict Precept—By It We Are Recognized as Christ's Disciples—God Regards As Done to Himself the Good We Do to Our Neighbor—II. The Love of Neighbor Is Profitable, Because the Love of Neighbor Covers a Multitude of Sins, Insures Pardon and Everlasting Happiness—III. Love of Enemies Is Enjoined Upon Us All—There Are Three Degrees in This Love: 1. To Suffer With Patience and Resignation All Injustices, Humiliations and Affronts—Meekness Preserves Charity and Often Gains the Offender's Good Will—2. To Wish An Enemy All the Good He May Desire—3. To Sacrifice One's Comfort, Honor or Goods, yea Life Itself for an Offender.

I. The love of neighbor is secondary only to the love of God, and comprises, with the proper or reasonable love of self, the second Commandment. The Savior nowhere inculcates directly the love of self, because that love is natural and has only to be limited and regulated by the principles of the moral law and of sound reason. We are selfish by nature and but too apt to make inordinate self-love the rule of all our actions, disregarding thereby the love we owe above all to God and the love, similar to the proper love of ourselves, we owe to our neighbor. The Savior clearly taught the two Commandments when He said to the doctor of the law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first Commandment, and the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On those two Commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets," that is, all other Commandments and all the teachings of the prophets are comprised in these two.[1] The

[1] Matt. xxii. 37, 40.

love of neighbor is further explained by Our Lord when He says: "All things therefore whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them; for this is the law and the prophets." [2] From these quotations we conclude that the love of God comes first, for it is the greatest Commandment. To this love of God, all other love must be subordinate; it is the supreme rule of our thoughts, desires and actions; but as men depend not only on God, but also upon each other for the good of the individual and society at large during this mortal life, and as God has so willed it, for the maintenance of order and peace, a second Commandment is necessary and though not of equal weight with the first, Our Lord declares it similar to it, because the observance of it is also necessary unto salvation, and because no one can love God if he refuse or neglect to love his neighbor. St. John emphatically declares that the love of God and the love of neighbor are inseparable; these are his words: "If a man say, I love God and he hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God, Whom he seeth not? And this commandment we have of God, that he who loveth God, loveth also his brother." [3] Jesus also teaches us what love we owe our neighbor: Love thy neighbor as thyself; therefore whatsoever you can reasonably expect or desire that men should do to you, do you also to them. We should then, in order to form a proper judgment of the love due to our neighbor, place ourselves in his condition and circumstances, and whatever we judge that we might properly desire that others should do to us, if we occupied their place or conditions were reversed, that we owe our neighbor.

The Commandment of the love of neighbor is a strict and rigorous precept, for without its observance the law of God cannot be maintained. Our Lord even goes so far as to refuse any gift from the hands of them who do not love their neighbor. "If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift." [4] This warning of Our Lord

[2] Matt. iv. 12. [3] 1 John iv. 20. [4] Matt. v. 23.

refers to any just grievance our neighbor has against another, and if one be not loved as he should by a fellow-neighbor, has he not a just grievance? Our Savior shows a real earnestness in inculcating the obligation of neighborly love, when He says: "These things I command you, that you love one another."[5]

The love of neighbor was to be the sign by which the disciples of Our Lord could be recognized: "By this shall all men know," says Jesus, "that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another."[6] "There are many signs that distinguish a Christian," says St. John Chrysostom, "but charity towards neighbors is the most conspicuous and the most conclusive."[7] The earnestness of Christ's command in inculcating the love of neighbor is also inferred from the reward of those who observe it and from the punishment of those who neglect it, for the reward attached to the service we render our brethren is the same as if it were done to God Himself. On the last day the King and Judge will pass favorable sentence on those who have given to eat to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, who have harbored the harborless, covered the naked and visited the sick and prisoners, and then He will add in explanation: "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me."[8] The rigor with which the just Judge will punish those who fail in charity towards their neighbor is enough to make one shudder: "Depart from Me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave Me not to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me not to drink; I was a stranger and you took Me not in, naked and you covered Me not, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me."[9]

II. We have already learned from the texts of Holy Scriptures that the love of God cannot exist without the love of neighbor, and as a consequence there is an eternal punishment attached to the neglect of bestowing upon one's neighbor the love due him; but the objection might be raised that there are other sins besides the want of charity, which pre-

[5] John xv. 17. [6] John xiii. 35. [7] Hom. li. in *Ep. ad Heb.*
[8] Matt. xxv. 40 *seq.* [9] *Ibid.*

clude our entrance into heaven. True, "But before all things," says St. Peter, "have a constant mutual charity among yourselves; for charity covers a multitude of sins."[10] The Book of Proverbs is still more explicit, for the Holy Ghost assures us that "Hatred stirreth up strife and charity covereth all sins;"[11] and not that there is question here of charity towards our fellow-men, for it is opposed to hatred and strifes, and we know that hatred among neighbors causes strifes. As we must all confess ourselves sinners, who will fail to become charitable that he may obtain the absolute certainty of forgiveness? The Angel Raphael explained to Tobias how a sinner who deserves eternal punishment, from impious becomes the friend of God: "For alms deliver us from death," he said, "and the same is that which purgeth away sins and maketh to find mercy and life everlasting,"[12] and the crowning of this bounty and mercy of God for the charitable sinner is that God considers as done to Himself whatever charity we bestow upon our neighbor,[13] and therefore those that have practiced charity towards their neighbor will be placed at the right hand of the King on the day of judgment and hear His sentence: "Come ye blessed of My Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me to drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; naked and you covered Me; sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me."[14]

As to the acts of charity towards our neighbor, they comprise all that we may reasonably expect that others should do to us, if we were in need of help or assistance, and that without distinction of persons or of their condition of life, that is, our love should extend to all our fellow-men, be they known or unknown, relatives or strangers, friends or enemies. This does not mean that all people alike deserve from our part an equal love and kindness; for parents, relatives, friends and benefactors have a special right to our affection, gratitude and devotedness; but our charity should exclude no one and not even our enemies, for

[10] 1 Peter iv. 8. [11] Prov. x. 12. [12] Tobias xii. 9.
[13] Matt. xxv. 40. [14] Matt. xxv. 34 *seq.*

as they are all neighbors, help and aid are due to all and in proportion to their wants and necessities.

III. It requires no great effort to love those who have befriended us or to whom we owe a special debt or gratitude, but it is more than human to love our enemies and nevertheless, our Savior has inculcated that duty in very clear terms: "I say to you," said the meek Jesus, "love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you, that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust; for if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? Do not even the publicans this? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? Do not also the heathens this? Be ye therefore perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." [15]

Let us examine the different degrees in the love of enemies and the means of practicing charity towards them.

The first degree consists in suffering with patience, meekness and calm all the offenses and indignities which our neighbor may have caused, and this resignation to the will of God, who has permitted them, should be exterior as well as interior, that is, our outward conduct should conform to our interior sentiments. It is not a mark of great fortitude to condone interiorly in the soul our neighbor's injustice, but to show by acts that one is not annoyed or disturbed thereby, wounds the pride of many Christians otherwise well disposed. When insults or other offenses of a less or greater import are offered to the true disciple of Christ, he will at least suffer in silence, if there be no necessity of explaining his conduct, and if an explanation be given, let it be done without harshness of words and without sourness or peevishness in the tone of the voice. When the Savior was struck a severe blow in the court of the high priest by one of the attendants who said: "Answerest Thou the high priest so?" Jesus said meekly: "If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil, but if well, why strikest thou Me?" [16] When the honor of His Father demanded it, He answered humbly when He was questioned, but never murmured nor com-

[15] Matt. v. 44 *seq.* [16] John xviii. 23.

plained when the vilest accusations were brought against Him. "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter....and He opened not His mouth." [17]

Many holy men and women have trodden in the footsteps of the Savior and followed His example of patience and meekness, and forgiveness towards their offenders and persecutors. We have already had occasion to point to the forbearance of David towards Saul, who sought his life; towards Semei, who foully insulted him and on whom Abisai the king's attendant wished to avenge the insult by beheading him. David by preventing the attendant from injuring Semei, gave us the example how to act towards calumniators, defamers and insulters: he inwardly accepted the opprobium as a merited punshment for the sins by which he had offended his bountiful God. "Let him alone," said David, "that he may curse as the Lord hath bidden him." [18] Meekness in the midst of outrageous conduct on the part of one's enemies has often two beneficial results: it always preserves charity and often gains the good will of the offender, if not his conversion. "A mild answer," says the Holy Ghost, "breaketh wrath; but a harsh word stirreth up fury," [19] and "A passionate man stirreth up strife: he that is patient appeaseth those that are stirred up." [20]

The second degree of the love of an enemy consists in wishing him all the good he may desire. "Return good for evil," says St. Paul, "and when you are offended in action or in words, bless them that persecute you and curse not." [21] "Do good to them that hate you," says the Savior, "and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you; that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven." [22] This the Savior taught and likewise practiced, for when He hung on the Cross in His agony of death, He prayed for His executioners, tried to execute their crime and appealed to the sweet name of Father to assure a favorable hearing: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." [23] The protomartyr of the Church, the intrepid soldier, who followed closely in the footsteps of His Master, the holy deacon St. Stephen likewise prayed for them who stoned

[17] Isaias liii. 7. [18] 2 Kings xvi. 11. [19] Prov. xv. 1. [20] *Ibid.*, xviii.
[21] Rom. xii. 14. [22] Matt. v. 44. [23] Luke xxiii. 34.

him to death, for St. Luke relates that whilst he was being stoned, "Falling on his knees, he cried with a loud voice saying: Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." [24] St. Augustine commenting on St. Stephen's prayer, adds: "If you cannot imitate the Lord, imitate His followers." [25]

The third degree consists in making personal sacrifices for an enemy in a close imitation of the heroic love of our Savior, who gave His life for His enemies. In the second degree the disciple of Christ is asked to practice what is commanded by the Divine Teacher, who lays down as a rule to do good to and pray for enemies; but here a still greater love is proposed as the most perfect of all, and it consists in sacrificing ourselves, our honor, our goods, yea life itself for those who have given us offense. "If thy enemy be hungry," says the Book of Proverbs, "give him to eat; if he thirst, give him water to drink....and the Lord will reward you;" [26] but this charity is imposed as a duty and demands no great sacrifice. The Samaritan's love of a Jew and his charity towards him, related by Our Lord as a parable, is totally different. Jews and Samaritans were enemies and were not on speaking terms. Now, a man on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was robbed, stripped, and left half dead. A priest and thereafter a levite saw the wounded man, but passed on without the least concern about him; but a Samaritan happened to come along and he, seeing the suffering man, was moved with compassion. He bound up his wounds and bathed them with oil and wine, took him on his own beast to the nearest inn, and there took care of him. The next day he took out two pence and gave them to the host and said; take care of him, and whatsoever thou shalt spend over and above I will repay thee at my return." [27] Our Savior here proposed a heroic act of charity towards a man of a hated nation, a charity of such transcendant nature that it could only be accomplished with help from above, but such supernatural aid will not be denied to those who pray for it. Jesus has proposed the Samaritan's love for our imitation, but only after having given us the example of it in His own life, for He is the

[24] Acts vii. 59.
[25] *Serm. 2, de Sanctis.*
[26] Prov. xxv. 21.
[27] Luke x. 30 *seq.*

true Samaritan, who has sacrificed His honor, His glory, His comfort and contentment, yea, His very life to redeem man from slavery. He not only prayed for His enemies, but He gladly gave with His life the last drop of His Sacred Blood to make us sinners, His enemies and the enemies of His Father, His brethren and co-heirs of the substance which was His as the only begotten of His Father.

We will now see how in ordinary circumstances we can imitate our Teacher, follow Him and become disciples of so generous a Master.

CHAPTER V

Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy

A. Corporal Works of Mercy—I. The Corporal Works of Mercy May Be Designated as Almsgiving—Almsgiving Is a Moral Virtue—It May Become a Divine Virtue—It Is Commanded As a Strict Precept—To Almsgiving Belongs All Help Given to Those Who Are in Need of It—II. Benefits That Acquire to Them That Practice the Virtue of Almsgiving: 1. Merciful Deeds Toward Neighbor Obtain Mercy from God; and 2. The Sacrifice We Make of Our Goods Being Meritorious, Satisfies for the Temporal Punishment Due to Sin.

B. Spiritual Works of Mercy—Spiritual Works of Mercy Exceed Greatly In Worth All Temporal Merciful Deeds—I. There Is Nothing That We Should Esteem More Than to Co-operate with God In Saving Souls—II. Fraternal Correction—1. Its Obligation—2. Who Are Bound to Make it?—3. How Should It Be Made?—4. When Sinners Should Be Corrected with Severity?

A. Corporal Works of Mercy.

I. The chief corporal works of mercy are: to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to ransom the captive, to harbor the harborless, to visit the sick and to bury the dead. We will class all corporal works of mercy under the name of almsgiving.

Almsgiving considered as a moral virtue is an inclination to give through compassion something to the needy for God's sake; and as an act it is the giving of anything to the needy for the sake of charity. It differs from benevolence, because the motive of the latter is at best only a natural compassion, whilst almsgiving is inspired by God and has God for its ultimate end, and therefore, the virtue is supernatural in its origin and in its motive, which is God's holy will. Almsgiving becomes a divine virtue, if one sees in the needy the person of God or if the love of God is the principal motive of one's merciful deed.

Almsgiving is not inculcated as a work of supererogation, but as a strict precept. "Son," says the Holy Ghost, "defraud not the poor of alms and turn not away thine eyes from the poor..afflict not the heart of the needy, and defer not to give to him that is in distress."[1] The rigor of the same precept is more deeply impressed upon our mind when we consider the judgment pronounced upon the damned by the Supreme Judge on the last day: "Depart from Me, ye cursed....I was hungry and you gave Me not to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me not to drink."[2] Almsgiving is a strict obligation imposed upon every individual who has more than what is necessary for his support as well as for the maintenance of his family, the education of his children and the exigencies of his state of life, provided that he who asks help be really in need. The obligation of giving alms to the poor was also proclaimed by the Mosaic Law. Moses explaining the Law said: "There shall not be wanting poor in the land of thy habitation; therefore I command thee to open thy hand to thy needy and poor brother, that liveth in the land."[3] From the natural law that commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves, from the practices of the Savior and His Apostles, and from many texts of the Old and New Testament, we must come to the conclusion drawn by St. Augustine, that "In the inspired books of the Old and New Testament, God ceases not to admonish us and to command us, always and everywhere, to urge almsgiving upon the faithful."[4]

Our Savior, always eager to teach us by word and example, performed one of His greatest miracles to inculcate the necessity of almsgiving, when He fed over five thousand people with two barley loaves and a few fishes, and His solicitude for the poor made many saints declare that God not only considers all charity done to the poor as done to Himself, but that it is more agreeable to Our Lord to be fed in the person of the poor than in His own person. Moreover, almsgiving makes the giver like unto God: "Man is never more divine," says St. Gregory Nazianzen, "than when he deserves well of others, whether he gives much or

[1] Eccli. iv. 1.
[2] Matt. xxv. 41 *seq.*
[3] Deut. xv. 11.
[4] *De Eleem.*

whether he gives little, provided he give according to his means."

By alms we do not simply understand money, clothing or other things given to the needy, but all help we contribute freely to the relief of our neighbor's wants and in that sense even a rich man may, in peculiar circumstances, need assistance from them who are poorer than he. We include in almsgiving the seven corporal works of mercy, enumerated above, and all other assistance tending more to the welfare of the body than of the soul, and all such and similar deeds come under the general term of corporal works of mercy or almsgiving.

II. Christians should be often reminded that if they desire mercy from God, they should also be merciful to their brethren, for "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy;" and again: "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again," [5] and that may be understood not only of spiritual rewards attached to all good works, but also of the material help God will give to the charitable by compensating them for their generosity to the poor by more abundant crops or by great success in all their business enterprises.

Almsgiving is the more acceptable to God, because, whilst good in itself, it also imparts a certain sacrifice of our worldly goods or of our bodily comfort, and therefore all alms-deeds satisfy for the temporal punishment due to sin. Two things, says the Angelic Doctor, are necessary to make a thing satisfactory, viz: it must be good or tend to God's honor, and it must be painful or necessitate some sacrifice. Almsgiving must be good, because it conforms to the order and good will which God intended should reign among His children upon earth, as well as to the Divine Goodness, whose inclination is to share with others all good things, as we have already remarked. All temporal and spiritual works of mercy demand some sacrifice either of the soul or of the body or of our worldly possessions, [6] and hence they all satisfy God's justice for the temporal punishment due to forgiven sins. Finally, liberality moderates the inordinate love of riches and the fear of losing them.

[5] Matt. vii. 2. [6] St. Thomas, Supp. q. 15 a. 2, 3.

B. Spiritual Works of Mercy.

We have learned from childhood that the chief spiritual works of mercy are mainly seven, viz: to admonish the sinner, to instruct the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, to comfort the sorrowful, to bear wrongs patiently, to forgive all injuries, and to pray for the living and the dead.

In the preceding chapter the excellence of the corporal works of mercy and the spiritual benefits derived from them have been explained, but far more noble and beneficial are the spiritual works of mercy. "As the soul is better than the body," says St. John Chrysostom, "it must be said that they, who by their advice and assiduous instruction, cause men, who wallow in the mire of sin, to enter into the right path or the slothful into God's service, by showing them the radiant beauty of virtue and the turpitude of vice, deserve greater recompenses than they who distribute their wealth and goods to the poor."[7] St. Thomas gives several reasons why the spiritual works of mercy surpass in excellence and merit the merciful deeds that tend to the alleviation of bodily needs and sufferings: 1. If we consider the gift itself in any merciful act, a spiritual or supernatural gift surpasses a temporal gift. Can we compare earth with heaven or worldly pleasures with the everlasting delights in God's company, or time with eternity? 2. If we consider the beneficiary of our merciful deeds, is the immortal soul not nobler than the corruptible body? 3. When we come now to the act itself in both classes of merciful works, spiritual and corporal, it is mainly the soul that acts in the former and the body in the latter. 4. The spiritual works of mercy are usually supernatural in their motive, whilst the corporal works are often mere acts of benevolence prompted by a natural compassion; for it is evidently more difficult to rise from the material to the supernatural than from the spiritual to the supernatural. As an instance let us cite a case to the point: if anyone wishes to help a needy family, he thinks of the opportune moment or of the best way of sending the aid or alms already determined upon, and he is not likely to trouble himself about the supernatural motives which

[7] St. Chrys., *Hom. in Gen.*

should prompt him in his charitable act, unless he be accustomed to perform all his actions for a supernatural motive; but if we now suppose that the same man instructs the ignorant regarding the duties of his holy religion or admonishes the sinner or counsels the doubtful regarding their obligations, etc., can he expect to succeed in his charitable designs unless he rely on the help of God and on a supernatural reward, or unless the teachings of Christ encourage him in the difficult task he has undertaken? Hence we may conclude that spiritual works of mercy, although more seldom practiced, are usually undertaken for a superior motive and therefore they are also more meritorious.

It is not our intention to explain each spiritual work of mercy separately, but as has been done with the corporal works, when we included them under the head of almsgiving, we will comprise all the spiritual deeds of mercy towards our neighbor under the name of fraternal correction, for the motive of all of them, except the last, is the amendment of our neighbor by preventing his sinning either through sloth, ignorance, obstinacy or excessive grief or through the scandal he may give to his weak brother. Even suitable punishment meted out to obstinate offenders by superiors, such as parents, guardians, teachers, masters, employers, superiors of religious communities or ecclesiastical authorities also come under the head of fraternal correction. As to the last spiritual work of mercy we have spoken of its obligation in the article on Prayer.

Fraternal correction is an admonition by which one strives for charity's sake to obtain the emendation of a sinner. According to that definition, the correction regards mainly sinful deeds already committed, but, when a neighbor is exposed to the danger of sinning, an admonition becomes likewise obligatory, if one can without great loss to himself prevent another from offending his God. Reason itself should convince any right-minded Christian of the obligation of fraternal correction, which falls upon all men capable of undertaking it, for aid must be given to a neighbor in his spiritual as well as in his temporal needs. The precept of fraternal correction is also inculcated by Our Lord Himself: "If thy brother," He said, "shall sin against thee, go and

rebuke him between thee and him alone."[8] Here Our Blessed Savior only mentions the injury done to ourselves, but the motive being the same in all charitable admonitions, to wit: to reclaim a neighbor from his evil ways, and as in fraternal correction due regard must be had to our neighbor's honor and reputation, our Savior's warning extends to all sinful deeds which have been committed by any neighbor or of which he may become guilty if he is not timely warned.

Of the excellence of this special charitable and merciful act, St. Dennys the Areopagite says: "Among all divine things, the most divine of all is to co-operate with God toward the conversion of sinners."[9] "There is nothing so agreeable to the Lord," says St. John Chrysostom, "there is nothing which He takes so much to heart than the salvation of souls, for the Apostle avers, that He will that all men be saved and arrive at the knowledge of the truth. God Himself has said: I will not the death of the sinner but that he be converted and live. Therefore as we have a Lord so merciful and benevolent, let us also learn to labor for our own salvation and for that of our brother." The same holy Doctor quotes Jeremiah and in an explanation of the text he has the following: "He, says Our Lord, who conducts his neighbor from error to truth and from sin to virtue imitates Me as far as it is possible to any man. For, notwithstanding that He is God, He was clothed with our flesh and He endured all the miseries of human nature and even suffered the torments of His passion only to deliver us from the malediction we brought upon ourselves by our sins."[10] Therefore, we may conclude with St. Gregory that: "There is no sacrifice more agreeable to God than zeal for the salvation of souls;"[11] and with St. Thomas who says of fraternal correction: "It is an act of charity preferable to the cure of a bodily infirmity and to almsgiving by which indigence is averted."[12]

We have stated already that the obligation of fraternal correction falls upon all men who are able to undertake it and who may reasonably hope for a successful issue of their

[8] Matt. xviii. 15. [9] *De cael. Hier.*, c. 3. [10] *Loc. cit.*
[11] Hom. xii in Exech. [12] 2. 2. q. 33 a. 1.

efforts. It constitutes a precept in so far as it may be necessary to procure the amendment of our neighbor, but this precept does not bind us always and everywhere.[13] To be bound by the divine precept of fraternal correction, it is commonly required that the sin committed by our neighbor, who needs correction, be a mortal sin or may through scandal or otherwise lead to mortal sin or do grievous spiritual injury to others; that there be a probable hope of success, for correction often irritates an obstinate sinner and causes him to blaspheme; that no one more fitted will undertake the correction and that there be but little probability of the sinner's emendation without it.

It is principally the duty of superiors to admonish those under their charge, and by superiors we mean parents and those who have parental authority for the time being; also those who represent the spiritual authority in the Church and the heads of religious communities. All superiors are bound to correct their delinquent inferiors, not only by charity, but likewise by justice, and they are liable before God for all the foreseen evils that result from their neglect or their unwillingness to comply with their duty. They are likewise enjoined to punish obstinate sinners, for he who wills the amendment of his neighbor, necessarily will employ the means thereto, and for stubborn perverseness or obstinate rebellion severity is usually the only remedy. From the example of Heli, superiors should understand the serious obligation of fraternal correction. Heli lost the priesthood and all its prerogatives as well as his children, and possibly he forfeited his salvation by neglecting to correct his criminal sons.

Although fraternal correction is an obligation imposed upon us all, if the amendment of our neighbor requires it, there is nothing more difficult than to undertake it successfully, and the reason is that man, through innate pride, is averse to being corrected and reluctantly admits his guilt, and that no general rule can be given that will suit every case.

Before all things charity or the love of God and of neighbor should be the principal motive that induces anyone

[13] St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 33 a. 1, 2.

to attempt an admonition or fraternal correction, and the following rules may further help us and guide us in our merciful undertakings. The superior should know or study the character and disposition of the offender, commonly use moderation and meekness in words and in actions, and always in the beginning, and have recourse to severity and punishments only when all other means have failed; and even then, superiors should maintain interior meekness. "A friendly correction," observes St. Ambrose, "profits more than a vehement reprimand; the former produces confusion and the latter excites indignation. It is well that he whom you correct look upon you as a friend rather than as an enemy. One is more easily moved by advices than he gives way to reproaches." [14]

There is also a certain order to be observed which Our Blessed Lord Himself has indicated in the following text: "If thy brother shall offend against thee, go and rebuke him between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee thou shalt gain thy brother. And if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may stand. And if he will not hear them, tell the Church. And if he will not hear the Church let him be to thee like a heathen and a publican," that is, abandon him to his wickedness and obstinate perverseness. [15] The whole context of the chapter reveals to us that what is taught therein is but a consequence of the fundamental truth that: "The Son of Man is come to save that which is lost," [16] and therefore He warns His hearers against scandalizing innocents, shows His paternal solicitude for one lost sheep, and teaches the obligation of fraternal correction and the order to be followed in making it.

It is clear that the first admonition tending to the correction of a delinquent neighbor should usually be done privately with a view of preserving his honor and reputation. In case the first admonition be fruitless, the correction should not be abandoned, but the admonition should be renewed in the presence of one or two witnesses, and if the sinner still remains obdurate, the Church or his legitimate superior should be notified and if he will not hear the Church, all

[14] L. 8 in Lucam, c. 18. [15] Matt. xviii. 15 *seq.* [16] Verse 11.

further correctional efforts may be abandoned. Our Lord's promise of help should encourage us cheerfully to undertake a fraternal correction, for He gave a solemn assurance of it in the following words: "Again I say to you that if two of you shall consent upon earth concerning anything they shall ask, it shall be done to them by My Father who is in heaven; for where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." [17]

Besides the circumstances which would make any attempt at correction useless, if not harmful, there are probably other cases in which for obvious reasons the order of correction prescribed by Our Lord cannot be observed, as when there is question of scandal of a serious nature, which should be promptly counteracted and punished, or because the sinful deed has become public, as the reason for the secret admonition no longer exists. The only witness of the crime may also be utterly unfit to undertake a correction. In all such and similar cases it is usually more advisable to notify the immediate superior of the delinquent.

There are indeed many who excuse their neglect of undertaking this salutary fraternal correction by forming the impression that their efforts would be useless, but there are others more fit to attempt the task and that the person in need of being corrected will be displeased and will brook no interference in things that concern no one but himself.

We answer to all such futile excuses that, as has been explained, fraternal correction is a serious obligation, on which our neighbor's eternal welfare and our own may depend: it is a duty binding under pain of mortal sin, provided our neighbor's sin constitutes a grievous offense or may lead to mortal sin or if venial only, that serious scandal may result from it or may, through its frequency of repetition, cause a relaxation of the religious spirit in a religious community, and provided that there be at least a probability that the admonition will be beneficial, and can be done without proportionate inconvenience.

True, if others more fit than ourselves undertake the charitable duty, we are exempt from the obligation, but if the person we claim to be more fit for the work than our-

[17] *Ibid.*, xix. 20.

selves, refuses or neglects to assume the obligation, upon whom does it devolve? First of all upon superiors, if they are cognizant of the evil deeds, but if not, all the witnesses of the crime or sinful intent are equally bound if they are able to do it. You may perhaps say, says St. Augustine, that you are not eloquent enough. But to admonish a neighbor you have no need of discourse or eloquence. If you see that your neighbor is falling into the sin of fornication, tell him: you are doing wrong. What? Do you not blush? Are you not ashamed? It is an evil—But he knows very well that the action is bad—True; notwithstanding he is dragged into it by his passions. The sick man also knows that he does wrong when he drinks cold water and nevertheless he has to be restrained from doing it....for when inclination pushes one along, one can not direct himself. It behooves you who are well to procure remedies for the sick." [18]

The plea that the person to be corrected may resent your interference and be displeased, nowise exempts you from the duty which God Himself imposes upon you, unless you have good reason to fear bodily harm, grave injury to your reputation, the loss of a lucrative position or other serious harm. Therefore inferiors should not attempt to correct superiors, except when the conduct of the latter is detrimental to the spiritual welfare of a parish or a community, and then, to prevent further scandal, their conduct should be reported to the proper ecclesiastical superiors, but one should first consult his director or confessor lest appearances may deceive and great harm may be done to the innocent.

The excuse that the correction will be useless is a valid one, if one be certain of its uselessness. Therefore, there is no obligation to correct the wicked who have no faith nor religious sentiments, for "He that rebuketh a wicked man, getteth himself a blot. Rebuke not a scorner lest he hate thee. Rebuke a wise man and he will love thee." [19] As to the case of one who conscientiously doubts the profitableness of the correction, a distinction becomes necessary. If he is convinced that it will do no harm, he is bound to undertake it, and that follows clearly from the law laid down by Our

[18] Hom. xxx. *Ep. ad. Heb.* [19] Prov. ix. 7, 8.

Savior, for He supposes that the first attempt may be fruitless and then He directs that after the first failure, a new attempt be made in the presence of one or two witnesses. If one has reason to fear that the correction may do harm, but is not certain of it, and he doubts also the success of it, then he had better abstain from admonishing the sinner, except the latter be upon his death-bed and be in danger of losing his soul.

Let us conclude that fraternal correction should be prompted by charity, that is, undertaken in a spirit of charity, conducted in a charitable manner both inwardly and outwardly, that it be guided in all its stages by charity, and that it be consummated in charity and thus, the correction being charitable in all its aspects, will be paternal with inferiors, kind with equals and reverential towards superiors.

THE END

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Discernment of Spirits

Temptations

Discernment of spirits is based on and prompted by the virtue of discretion. Discretion may be considered as a natural or supernatural virtue. He that undertakes nothing without weighing its temporal advantages and its possible evil consequences, possesses the natural or acquired habit of discretion, and he that is so prudent and circumspect in his thoughts, words and acts that he first scrutinizes their morality and their spiritual advantages, as well as their evil tendencies, so that he may arrive at a prudent judgment and determination before acting or even before giving his consent, has acquired the virtue of discretion.[1] Thus understood, discretion is a precious gift infused into the soul by God, and Cassian calls it the mother, the custodian and moderatrix of all virtues.[2]

It belongs to discretion to procure that the intellect, before the will gives entrance to a thought into the mind, or admits any suggestion, or consents to any affection in the heart, investigate first the good or evil there may be in them or in their consequences. But whereas it is not always an easy task to detect the moral good or evil there may be in any thought or suggestion encountered by the intellect, for all that appears to be innocent is not always so and what seems to be virtuous is not necessarily true virtue, the masters of spiritual life, inspired thereto by the Holy Ghost, who says: "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits if they be of God,"[3] have sought in the sources of man's thoughts, inclinations and affections additional guidance and light to determine their morality, for they rightly judged that no good can come from an evil source and since running waters are the purer the nearer they are to their pure source, so likewise thoughts, sentiments, suggestions and affections are the purer and holier, the more directly they issue from their holy source, God.

With St. Bernard,[4] who followed in this the Holy Scriptures, and the masters of spiritual life before him, we distinguish five sources called spirits, to which all our thoughts, inclinations and affections may be ascribed: the devil, the world, the flesh, God and His angels; but since angels act always in conformity to God's holy will, the angelic spirit is identical with the divine Spirit. Hence we have but four spirits whispering or speaking to us to influence all the inclinations and motions of man's faculties whether in the body or in the soul.

[1] See Prudence.
[2] Coll., chap. IV.
[3] 1 John iv. 1.
[4] *Tract. De Consc.*, c. 7.

It is evident that from God but the holiest aspirations can come, but the devil, the world and the flesh are enemies, whom we have reason to fear, for they are the sources of all our temptations and of all our spiritual miseries. Of the three the world is the least dangerous, for its maxims and scandalous practices can only hurt those who frequent the world or who have adopted its spirit and its teachings. Forsooth, it is next to impossible to live in the world and not to be contaminated by it, and therefore Our Lord warns us against the world because of scandals, and to the young man who had kept the Commandments from his youth, He said: "If thou wish to be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor.... and come and follow Me."[1]

The temptations that spring from our vitiated nature—which we have called the flesh and which comprises both soul and body—are thoughts, concepts, influences, sentiments, inclinations, affections and motions, which, unless they be subdued, will engender shameful vices, for of their very nature they are often incentives to evil, and therefore, they are a continual danger to our eternal welfare. Love of self is the cause of all our sins, for sin has either its source in an inordinate appetite for what we judge to be good or in a cowardly fear of what seems evil. Since our nature is composed of two substances, the body and the soul, we find in us two substantial and distinct appetites, the intellectual appetites, called also the passions of the soul and the sensual appetites, called also the concupiscence of the flesh.

In a general way, the world is known to us by its inordinate love of riches, pleasures and glory: three vanities that detach the heart from perfect union with God. Therefore the spirit of the world speaks to the intellect of those vain things and it speaks to the heart, when we are inclined or moved to find pleasure in vain things, such as dress, fineries, palatial homes, or to glory in riches or to envy our neighbor's dignity, his eminent state and the honors bestowed upon him. The spirit of the flesh speaks of whatever may please the senses, as when it moves the will to seek the acquisition of whatever may be agreeable to them. Thus food, drink, clothing, a comfortable dwelling, a soft couch, without speaking of more shameful and damnable pleasures, are the thoughts and inclinations injected into the soul by the spirit of the flesh.

Both the spirit of the world and the spirit of the flesh find a ready entrance into the heart of man, mainly through self-love, pride and the love of ease, propensities but all too common, and likewise through natural inclination of our vitiated nature, but what makes the two spirits of the world and of the flesh so much to be dreaded, is that they become auxiliaries, yea mere tools in the hands of the devil in his frequent attacks upon our spiritual welfare. This makes the devil our most formidable enemy, and words fail to describe his spirit.

The spirit of the devil is partly understood, if we consider his deep hatred of God and his diabolical envy of the true Christian,

[1] Matt. xix. 21.

who is devoted to the service of his Master. Satan's inconceivable pains, a just punishment of his rebellion, make him a spirit of unrest and the "Roaring lion seeking whom he may devour," and as a natural consequence, he strives to inject into the soul confusion, trouble, impatience under trials, and sentiments of displeasure against anyone, of suspicion, anger, hatred, envy and revenge. He is also able to worry us with thoughts and sensations of lustful pleasures, and of a degrading intemperance, which bring man to the level of the brute. When the intellect of man has now been obscured and his will been weakened by repeated falls, his soul becomes a mere plaything, if not a tool or an ally of Satan, an unscrupulous, wily, lying, deceitful and potent adversary; and how can anyone enslaved by sin resist such a formidable foe?

The Spirit of God speaks to us of holy truths that tend to His honor, the salvation of souls and the spread of His kingdom upon earth; and since we can do nothing in the supernatural order without the aid of divine grace, every truly good and pious thought, every virtuous desire or act is due and ascribable only to the Spirit of God.

The evil inclinations of our nature have frequently been the subject of our earnest studies in this manual, as well as the dangers we encounter in our contact with the world, and we deem it also of great importance that we should have a more comprehensive knowledge of the influence the devil exerts upon our thoughts and actions, and of the methods and means he usually employs to deceive us and to allure us into sin, but no one of the many ruses employed by Satan can deprive us of our liberty of action.

Apart from extraordinary and rare occurrences of which we read in the Gospel, and in which God permitted the devil to deprive a man of both intellect and free-will, and thus to cause acts for which the patient was not responsible, as in the case of those that were possessed, the devil cannot directly cause man to sin, for man, no matter what the temptation may be, remains a free agent. Satan may nevertheless excite the passions of the soul and the sensual appetites by phantasms, imageries and pictures, as well as suggest arguments and reasons to lead us on, or he may inject false ideas into our minds and wicked sentiments and affections into our hearts, which may end in sinful desires and actions, unless we resist and oppose them energetically.

There are three ways by which sensual appetites may be awakened, as when palatable food is placed before anyone to excite his appetite; he that offers the food is also a tempter and the suggestions or arguments to induce anyone to eat are also temptations. Satan offers phantasms instead of realities and thus awakens evil appetites and suggests arguments to extort consent,[6] and he can indirectly excite in us evil thoughts and affections relating to the evil desires of the flesh or to the passions of the soul. The devil can through representations, pictures, scenes and memories awaken in us love or hatred, hope or fear, desire, disgust, dislike, jealousy, envy, revenge, or any other passion unless dangerous thoughts and representations be

[6] *Cfr.* St. Thomas, 1. 2. q. 75-80.

promptly removed from the mind; but whatever be the means employed by the devil, he cannot extort consent, for no matter what the enticements may be, man remains always free to accept or reject the temptation.[r]

In order to explain further the dangers to which we are exposed from the attacks of Satan, we will now examine his ruses with regard to the secrets of man's soul. God alone sees the heart of man,[s] and neither angels and much less devils know the secrets of man's soul, but God makes them known to any one, and undoubtedly often discloses them to the saints, whose intercession we implore, and to our guardian angels, who watch over our thoughts, desires and actions. Although Satan cannot penetrate into the recesses of our mind and heart, he judges of our thoughts and affections by our mien, words, gestures and actions, and from that knowledge thus obtained, as well as from his long experience, he forms his judgments and determines upon the temptations that are most likely to effect our ruin. God alone knows future events depending on His own will and the free-will of man, but the devil is cognizant of all contingent events from their causes, like an engineer knows how much steam is required to put his machinery in motion. This adds greatly to the efficacy of Satan's plans in all his temptations, since he combines his great knowledge of future events with the wiles of his seductive art.

With a proper understanding of the teachings herein laid down, we shall do well to scrutinize, as far as we can, the dangerous or evil thoughts presented to our mind and the more pernicious sentiments and inclinations knocking at our heart and seeking admittance, for all these may engender in the soul criminal desires and sinful intents and move the will to execute them. It is the part of discretion to discover the source of the dangers that threaten our eternal welfare, that we may arm ourselves to withstand them successfully, for we are all aware that is is easier to vanquish a known enemy than one who hides his identity. This warning is principally applicable to representations, sentiments and emotions that at first sight have the appearance of virtue or at least seem indifferent; for if we are aware of their poisoned source, we are at once reminded of their dangerous tendency. If a young woman, for instance, feels inclined to visit a sick friend to console her or a needy family to offer aid, the inclination appears virtuous and charitable, but if she has good reason to fear that she will meet during her errand a person whose conversation and manners are nothing short of a temptation for her, she will either put off her intended visit or take with her a trusted companion. This warning is of little consequence if the thought or inclination is evil or dangerous in itself, for then prompt and strenuous opposition becomes indispensable, no matter what spirit prompted it; and yet, even in the case, the knowledge of its source will often suggest the choice of the best remedy effectually to resist the evil tendency. A burst of anger may be nothing more than a temptation of the devil; it may be due to aversion to a certain per-

[r] 1 Peter v. 8 *seq.*

[s] 1 Kings xvi. 7; Ps. vi. 7; vii. 10; Rom. viii. 27.

son or to an irascible temperament, or it may have originated in self-love or in an inordinate love of riches, pleasures and glory in the search for which one has been thwarted. It is plain that the remedy must be proportionate to the spiritual disease and suit the spirit to be vanquished, we should nevertheless except temptations against the holy virtue of purity which admit no scrutiny or examination as to their spirit, at least during the temptation, for impure thoughts, inclinations or sensations are deadly poison to the soul, and their impressions must be promptly obliterated from the mind and the heart; and as to impure sensations over which the will has no control, the best antidote to the deadly poison is sharp pain inflicted on the body in imitation of St. Francis of Assisi who rolled in a bed of thorns until the temptation had left him.

These preliminary observations find their application in nearly all the temptations which assail us, and in order that the principles herein set forth may have a practical bearing, we will apply them to our thoughts and sentiments of the heart, and we will strive to ascertain to what spirit evil thoughts and affections, dangerous to the spiritual welfare of the soul, may be ascribed.

Thoughts.

The most common thoughts we may generally attribute in part, if not wholly, to diabolical influences, are:

1. Useless thoughts, to which we may add vague and semi-conscious thoughts. All such, if averted to even slightly by the mind, are at least imperfections, cause great loss to the soul and leave it open to the attacks of the evil one, who finds an easy entrance into a vacant mind. The same may be said of distractions in any pious exercise. Careless Christians, if not by nature, at least through habit, are subject to useless thoughts, but what of ardent Christians? May we not ascribe them to the ruses of the devil, who, knowing full well that he could not successfully introduce evil thoughts into their minds, begins by suggesting vague and useless thoughts?

2. The second class of dangerous thoughts are thoughts of vain excellence, of distinction, of great success in difficult enterprises, which elicit admiration from friend and foe, of worldly wisdom, honors and praises, of riches, of influence over others, of exclusive and distinguished gatherings and festivities, of palatial homes and large retinue of servants and of similar vanities. Although all such and like thoughts are generally attributed to the wicked world, we must not lose sight of the fact that each one of us is a unit of that assemblage we call the world and that all such thoughts conform to our inherited pride and self-love. Satan also knows but too well what advantage he obtains over those who allow their minds to dwell on such vanities. They are often but useless thoughts, but if frequently indulged in, they promote ambition, cupidity and an inordinate desire of honors and praises.

3. Agreeable thoughts are those that relate to the well-being of

the body with regard to food, drink, dress and sleep and to whatsoever may please the sight, the hearing, the smell, the taste and the touch. We may refer to the same class of thoughts an insight or consideration of the means to procure those pleasures and comforts for ourselves and for those for whom we feel a natural, although lawful affection. As all these thoughts have their source in a lawful natural instinct, they become only illicit when they are opposed to the divine law and sound reason, but Satan always bent upon our destruction, often utilizes our natural instinct to allure us to an excess of solicitude for the future and for the comforts of life, and we have seen how the senses are often obstacles to perfection and the occasion of spiritual ruin.

4. Impure thoughts are of their very nature incentives to carnal delectation, and therefore, unless they be promptly removed and expelled with horror and indignation against the audacious intruder, they easily constitute a near occasion of sin and will not fail to inflict a mortal wound upon the soul. A sanguine temperament and memories of what we have seen, read or heard may be their source, but when in spite of our efforts they persist in returning when they have been expelled, especially so if they are accompanied with lively physical representations, they must be attributed to Satan and thus they become exceedingly troublesome thoughts.

5. Troublesome thoughts are disagreeable, irksome or painful thoughts, which have resisted all efforts to expel them. Some arise from too much solicitude in the performance of one's duties, or regard the success of laudable undertakings. They who labor under such thoughts deserve the same gentle rebuke Our Lord administered to Martha.[9] Others have their source in scruples and aridity, or in a melancholic temperament, or arise from fear of God's justice without taking into account His mercy and goodness. Since these subjects are treated in this Manual in their proper place, we need not dwell on them here at length. In all such cases peace of mind and heart, and confidence in God must be restored. The most disgusting of the troublesome thoughts are those which, although offensive in themselves, come with a train of corporal phantasms and often bring on sensations which one feels loath to mention even in confession; and furthermore, the greater one's resistance, the greater effort Satan makes to extort consent. For the consolation and encouragement of chaste souls thus afflicted, we will say with St. Bernard: Fear not, and place your whole confidence in God. Let the devil bark: he cannot bite or if he bites he can only bite the willing cowards. Resist where you can and tolerate what you cannot; be strengthened with that consoling conviction that "God will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able, but will also make with temptation issue that you may be able to bear it."[10]

6. Curious thoughts may be divided into two classes: Those that regard the conduct of our neighbor and those that regard all other happenings under the sun. If people were wont to observe their neighbor with a view of finding out their virtues and with the in-

[9] Luke x. 40. [10] 1 Cor. x. 13.

tention of imitating them, such conduct would contain nothing reprehensible, provided our neighbor be nowise annoyed thereby; but people whilst wishing to satisfy their curiosity, usually observe the doings of others in order to criticise their ways, their manners and customs, or for the purpose of gossiping about everybody and all things.

Curious thoughts are commonly tainted with uncharitable feelings, followed by uncharitable conversations in subsequent visits. How much there is of self-love in curious thoughts and how much of diabolical influence is hard to say. To be sure we will let the curious man or woman and the devil divide the honors, but the devil who is always on the alert to inject evil even into useless thoughts, has a large share in the conversations between curious and gossipping people. Many writers with apparent reason have compared curious women to women in labor, who being in pain wait impatiently for the hour of their delivery. As to those who are curious to know all that happens under the sun, and devour, so to say, every page of their daily paper, their fault lies mostly in the loss of time and that is a serious loss for people who have duties to perform and often neglect them through curiosity.

7. Suspicious thoughts are ideas or notions about a neighbor's guilt with slight or no foundation at all, or they regard his acts, which are susceptible of two interpretations: one favorable and the other unfavorable to him, but the suspicious man loses sight of the former and considers the latter only. It is easily seen how suspicions are opposed to the commandment of brotherly love. Self-love and pride are natural promoters of uncharitable thoughts, for the selfish and proud imagine that the defects of their neighbor enhance their own excellence and merit. The good or bad thoughts we conceive of our neighbor depend also upon the sentiments of one's heart towards him, for we are naturally inclined to think well of those we cherish, and a mind firmly imbued with Christian principles can alone keep from thinking evil of those his heart dislikes. Besides pride and many other passions of the soul, such as ambition, envy, jealousy, fear, a peevish and a sour temperament, are as many incentives to suspicious thoughts—from suspicion to a malicious judgment the transition is easy and who can distinguish one from another in their operations, except a moralist or one who has received a careful Christian training? Notwithstanding, we know that in matters of importance a temporary judgment constitutes a mortal sin. Satan has the power of bringing before the mind vivid representations of imaginary scenes, of persons and of their conduct, as circumstantial evidences of their guilt, and he will resort to suggestions and plausible arguments to prove the guilt of the innocent and the innocence of the guilty as best suits his purpose. Thus the wily enemy often succeeds in raising in our mind doubts about men's guilt, with strifes and deadly enmities as a consequence. Hence it is the duty of every Christian to reject all insinuations about a neighbor's guilt and to excuse his faults before his own mind, if he cannot deny them.[11]

[11] *Cfr.* Love of Neighbor.

Dangerous Sentiments of the Heart Considered as Temptations to Influence the Will.

Among the thoughts above mentioned and explained, but few are sinful if one confines himself to examining them as they are presented to the intellect, unless there be danger of taking delight in evil thoughts, for, if they have not been consented to or approved by the will, they do not constitute an act. Intellect and will must concur. We must except nevertheless impure thoughts, for, unless there be good reason for giving one's self up to a study in which impure thoughts are unavoidable, one would expose himself to the danger of finding delectation in imaginary things, which we must shun with the utmost care and diligence.

Nevertheless all dangerous thoughts are apt to cause affections which may lead to sin. Thus if one dwells for a time on an insult or injury received, displeasure will usually be the result, pride aggravates the insult received and exaggerates the harm done, and in those of an irascible temperament, movements of anger will likely ensue and unless that feeling is promptly subdued, they will lead to hatred and even to revenge or at least to desire of it.

Troublesome thoughts will likely cause disquiet, confusion and trouble in the soul, which, losing thereby its peace of mind and heart, is open to the most frightful attacks of the evil one. A troubled heart is the battleground which Satan selects in preference to all others: a troubled and confused soul can hardly ever escape unhurt from the wily enemy. Scruples and dejection after a serious fall, are among the most deplorable consequences of that disquiet that assails the soul and originates in troublesome thoughts. How many have arrived at the verge of despair, if not to the fatal sin of despair itself, because they have not in time restored their confidence in God's infinite bounty and mercy, and consulted in time their director or confessor or in default of them some pious and learned layman!

Disquiet, trouble and confusion are natural effects of analogous thoughts that upset the mind. Still any turbulent passion may cause them. The devil has always a part in the trouble that afflicts the soul, for it is his great opportunity of deceiving the unwary. Nothing annoys holy souls more than obscene representations and impure sensations, as if they denoted that God had delivered them body and soul to the infernal spirits. The best remedy, already mentioned above, is to strenuously resist them and to tolerate what we cannot effectually oppose, bearing in mind that inclinations which we cannot overcome, are no more sinful than obscene thoughts which we can not drive off, provided the will remains fully determined not to give its consent. By avoiding useless thoughts we bar the entrance into the heart to the devil, and finally by being seriously occupied in mind and body, the devil will find the entrance into the heart effectually blocked.

Curious thoughts open the way to officious intrusion into other people's business and lead to criticisms of their doings, and finally to criminal suspicion. If the devil then succeeds in injecting senti-

ments of inordinate self-love into the heart, of what injustice is not one capable?

They who want to regulate the affairs of others which in no wise concern them, have no time to regulate their own, and are thus exposed to all the attacks and ruses of the evil one. From it comes a lack of proper intention in our occupations, and temptations of vainglory are then but too common. Not being forearmed, we easily give way to impatience or disappointment through failure in our expectations.

Attachment to persons and things is also a mark of the diabolical influences as it takes the heart from God and enslaves it. What liberty has one left for pious affections, when the heart is too much attached to created things? Is the desire of imitating Jesus Christ in speech and actions not entirely forgotten? We find another mark of the diabolical spirit in unfaithfulness, dissimulation and duplicity. God is truth and as to us, veracity and candor are a reflection or participation of God's truthfulness. The devil is called the father of lies because even if he tells the truth, his object is to deceive the unwary. From the foregoing we need not wonder that the devil moves some to false zeal and false charity. Hence we find people, who have a mania of correcting anyone and everyone, without considering whether the admonition will not do more harm than good.[12]

The sudden rise of the passions without cause, stimulant or provocation points to the devil as their source. Imprudent looks may bring on evil thoughts or impure affections in a sanguine temperament, but when there is no apparent cause for them, the first movements, if sudden, must be attributed to the evil spirit.

Vain and agreeable thoughts, of which the first relate to things for which the world strives so strenuously and the latter regard the cravings of the flesh, excite by their very nature in the soul an inordinate love of the apparent and fallacious benefits to be derived from honors, riches and pleasure and from all that riches will procure for the satisfaction of the flesh. Since all the affections that flatter man's pride or please the flesh conform to his evil inclinations and are inherent in his vitiated nature, the simple thought of worldly vanities and of the desires of the flesh awakens in the heart analogous sentiments, which constitute serious temptations even for the most pious Christian. Hence the necessity of watching over all the wonderings of one's imagination and of keeping the mind occupied with useful or pious thoughts, in order that the devil's suggestions may be excluded from one's mind and heart.

The tendency of all useless, vain, agreeable, impure, suspicious and troublesome thoughts will become still more evident when we have considered attentively the vices inherent in our fallen nature.

Whereas we are only concerned now about the eternal welfare of the soul and not about man's temporal welfare, we may define vice as an affection of the soul for what it detrimental to its spiritual welfare. As virtue inclines to good, so vice inclines to evil. All vices spring from an inordinate self-love, which is therefore opposed

[12] See Fraternal correction.

to the dictates of sound reason. The principal vices that originate from self-love are: pride, covetousness, lust, gluttony, anger, envy and sloth. Envy does not immediately spring from self-love, but rather from vainglory, a daughter of pride. We have added "envy" among the seven, for the reason that the seven vices are deservedly called the seven capital sins, for they are the source of many other sins. Each one of these vices is for man an inclination to sin, but all sins, when they become habitual are committed very frequently, become in their turn vices, and therefore inclinations to repeat the offense against God. Pride, anger, envy and sloth belong to the passions of the soul; covetousness or inordinate love of riches may have for its end worldly glory, or, since riches will buy what flatters the senses, may have for its end lust and gluttony, which belong to the concupiscence of the flesh or the sensual appetites. As all these vices have been sufficiently explained, when the virtues opposed to them were under consideration in the body of this Manual, there is no need of explaining each one separately. All vices are inclinations to sin, that is, they are affections of the soul or appetites of the flesh that constitute a real danger to man's eternal welfare, for, owing to their evil tendencies, they are a continual source of temptation.

Whereas the vices are inherent in man's nature vitiated by original sin, therefore constant vigilance is required from the part of man that he may with God's grace—never denied to those who ask it—resist promptly the first motions or impulses of our corrupted nature before they attain such strength that our weak will is easily overcome in the beginning of the battle. We must not lose sight of the fact that the immediate effect of any passion of the soul or of any vicious sensual appetite is to obscure the intellect and weaken the will, and that in proportion to the force which the temptation has acquired. A fire can be easily extinguished before it gains headway, but when it has fed for a time on the combustible matter around it, the roaring conflagration tests the strength and ingenuity of many men, and often compels them to abandon all attempts to conquer the destructive element. "Behold how small a fire kindleth a great wood." [18]

And what if an incendiary starts the conflagration and adds fuel thereto, or a miscreant pours oil on the incipient fire? The passions of the soul and the sensual appetites, as we have explained, are inherent to our nature vitiated by original sin and therefore more prone to evil than to good, and they spring up and are felt in the body as well as in the soul even against our will, and still, they cannot always be ascribed to the evil inclinations of our nature and therefore we cannot attribute the beginning and progress of the temptation to the action of the flesh only. The spirit of the world has no influence over the vices named above, unless we are surrounded by worldlings or have adopted the spirit of the world as our own; God tempts no man, but what of the diabolical spirit? The temptations from the vices of our own nature, whether they reside prin-

[18] James iii. 5.

cipally in the soul or in the flesh, may or may not spring up without outside influence, but what is beyond any doubt, their greatest danger is not reached until the diabolical spirit adds by various representations and suggestions food to vicious nascent passions or sensual appetites. Satan will never cease to be the roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. He is often the incendiary that starts the fire and adds fuel to it, but if the tendencies of our vicious nature have kindled the small fire, Satan takes promptly notice of it, and pours oil thereon until the conflagration is beyond the control of the strongest and most virtuous man, unless the good God comes to his rescue.

From what we have learned relating to thoughts and affections and their spirit as temptations against our spiritual welfare, we can only come to one conclusion, and that is, that we trust, as far as we can, shun all incentives to an evil that might cause our eternal ruin.

In the course of our examination and study of the obstacles to perfection, we have been taught the means we should employ to resist the various temptations, by which the world, the devil and the flesh assail us, but is there no efficient means by which temptations can be prevented altogether and be entirely eliminated? Alas! there is none, for God has willed that angels as well as man should merit the glory to which they were destined, and therefore He allowed Adam and Eve to be tempted, and if we resist the temptation, it tends to our greater honor and glory, the more so, because since Adam's fall, our corrupted nature is an inducement to sin. Nevertheless, temptations are evils to be deplored; but if temptations cannot be prevented, we have learned that by overcoming the obstacles to perfection, we counteract the brusque and impetuous impulse, as well as the evil effects of temptations. We have also learned that by the means of perfection and the practice of the virtues we fortify ourselves against the assaults of temptations, diminish the fury of their onslaughts and lessen the frequency of their attacks.

Another and direct means to overcome the most dangerous temptations that assail us, is taught in this Appendix on Discernment of Spirits, and that remedy springs from the knowledge we have acquired of the influence, which the devil, the world, the sensual appetites and the passions of the soul exert on all of us. We have learned the danger of evil thoughts and the influence they have, not only on the heart or passions of the soul, but also on the sensual appetites. The intellect of man is the most noble, the most active and the most far-reaching of all the faculties of the soul. Truth is its direct object, but although it commands the will, it is not the mistress of the effects its thoughts produce on the affections of the heart and sensual appetites, for we have seen how disastrous to the spiritual welfare of man they may become. Since it is an undeniable fact, intellect and will must combine to bring before the mind only good and holy thoughts that are apt to engender holy desires and salutary resolutions. Therefore we should think of God, that, thereby we may excite in our hearts sentiments of admiration and complacency, and affections of the tenderest love and most filial fear

and reverence, that we may find delight in His infinite perfections. Thoughts on the passion of our Redeemer, to which He submitted through love of and compassion for us, His sinful and indigent creatures, will engender in the heart of the sincere Christian hatred for sin; they will move him to compassionate our Redeemer's pains and sufferings, and, with God's grace, they will excite in him the desire to follow in His footsteps and to suffer with patience, if not with joy, the ills of this present life. Thoughts on death and on the uncertainty of the hour of its coming, impress the mind with the necessity of being always prepared. Thoughts on the particular and especially on the general judgment will inspire in the soul a salutary fear of the day when thoughts, words, desires and all our actions whether good or evil or indifferent, shall be examined by an infinitely just Judge before the whole world, and it is well that we should extend our thoughts to the judgment of virtuous Christians, who have been ridiculed and despised here below, and of the wicked Christians and worldlings in general who have been honored and praised during their lives upon earth. Thoughts on hell, from which there is no redemption, and on its excruciating pains and unavailing lamentations can but fill the soul with such a dread that it will effectually be moved to the sincere resolution of shunning mortal sin, as the most deadly poison, as well as its dangerous occasions. Thoughts of heaven and its everlasting joy will inflame the heart with fervent desire of its possession, and will impel a fervent Christian gladly to take hold of the means of salvation, to strive for greater merit before God and to count as nothing all tribulations and afflictions, and finally, to despise all temporal satisfactions for fear of losing the right to the eternal reward of his good works.

With the same end in view of securing our eternal welfare, we will, like David, often meditate on the Commandments of God, for on their observance our happiness depends, and we should likewise often think of the sacraments and of the exercises indispensable to perfection that we may persevere in the service of God until death.

By far the most important of the conclusions we must come to from a careful consideration of the spirits that influence man's faculties, whether in the soul or in the body, is to consider the Spirit of God in our Model, Jesus Christ. Since Jesus is the Light of the world that shone in the darkness of a blind and depraved humanity, we will find in His doctrine and in His life the Spirit of God taught and practiced. "Put you on the Lord Jesus Christ,"[14] said the Apostle and that means that we must be clothed with His Spirit, for as He was led in all the circumstances of His life by the Spirit of His Father, our thoughts, words, desires and actions should always and everywhere conform to His.

The imitation of Christ should be our greatest concern, yea our only concern. This duty of following our Model, always, everywhere and in all things, should be a work of love: we should cherish it more than the apple of our eye. In it consists our glory, our temporal and spiritual welfare in this life and our eternal happiness in

[14] Rom. xii. 13.

the next. Every Christian man and woman, every child, every boy and girl, the young and the old, the healthy and the sick, the sufferers and those free from pain, the rich and the poor, the learned and unlearned, should, if asked what they are about, be able to say from their heart, if not with the lips, that the imitation of Christ is their sole aim.

Since the reformation of society at large can only be effected by the reformation of the individual, let us learn from Jesus to shun the world and the things that are in the world, and to detest its maxims and baneful example, for "If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him."[15] From Him let us learn also how to overcome Satan, the "roaring lion seeking whom he may devour:" let us resist his attacks, strong in faith, that is, confiding in God's help secured by prayer, and answer all his evil suggestions like true disciples of Christ: "Begone, Satan. It is written: God alone shalt thou adore and Him alone shalt thou serve."[16] When passions of the soul assail anyone, let him be animated by the Spirit of Christ, so simply but forcibly expressed by His warning words: "Learn of Me that I am meek and humble of heart," and if the flesh rises in combat to overwhelm the soul, let us remember the teaching of the Apostle: "We are not debtors to the flesh to live according to the flesh, for if you live according to the flesh, you shall die; but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live."[17]

We should also imitate Christ in the veneration He had for the will of His Father. We are not here to do our own will but the will of Him who gave us being. The will of God is made known to us by the teachings of Christ and of His Church, as well as by the orders of all our legitimate superiors. The Spirit of Christ inculcates not only obedience but a prompt, childlike and loving obedience, and therefore we should obey all legitimate superiors as we would God Himself, and Jesus taught us to love God with all the love our heart is capable of, when He said: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind.... Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."[18]

That love of God, which places man on an equality with the angels of heaven and which the Spirit of Christ by word and deed has taught us—for He inculcated constantly that "He came not to do His own will but the will of Him who sent Him"—is only attainable by denying ourselves and by following Christ's example even to the death of the cross, if God should demand it of us: thus we will be able to rise to that sublime love of God for His sake, since His perfections make Him infinitely amiable and beyond all man's comprehension. This simple but lofty truth should excite in our hearts the tenderest affection for a God so lovable, self-existent, necessary and independent, eternal, omnipotent, immense, omnipresent, all-wise, all-holy, who always was and always will be eternally the same.

[15] 1 John ii. 15. [16] Matt. iv. 11. [17] Rom. viii. 12. [18] Matt. xxii. 37.

O Man! learn now thy dignity and let the consciousness of it permeate thy whole being. With a grateful heart feel how the infinite God ennobled thee by deigning to be loved by thee! Furthermore, love tends to the union with the object of its love and this love begun on earth is the forerunner of the possession of thy God for an endless eternity. By nature thou art selfish and the all-good and all-holy God refuses not thy love even if it be partly selfish, for although infinitely good in Himself, He is infinitely good to thee in that He offers Himself the Infinite Good as the eternal reward to all those, who, during the short time of their life, sincerely love and serve Him. O precious heart, gift of the God of all goodness, burn then with love for the infinitely lovable God; may thou be enkindled like an immense furnace of love for Him who loved thee first and has never ceased to love thee! May all earthly dross of worldly affections be consumed in that divine fire, and whilst thou cherishes the image of thy Creator in thy neighbor here on earth, enkindle also in his breast the same fire which consumes thee, that thus thou may live in union with the love of Him, who lived and died for the love of thee. "I came to cast fire upon earth and what will I but that it be enkindled." [19]

[19] Luke xii. 49.

CONCLUSION

Dear Reader: We have concluded with God's help the task of showing you the way to Christian perfection, but remember that the study of perfection and the knowledge of the means that lead to it, in no wise insure its possession. You must practice everyday what you have learned and conform your life to the teachings laid down in this and kindred works. Above all love to practice what you have learned. We cannot experience "how sweet the Lord is," and find a heavenly delight in complying with our daily efforts to attain perfection and holiness, until with alacrity and joy we perform all our actions with a view of seeking in them the good pleasure of God. It is impossible that our celestial Father will for a long time deny His heavenly consolations to them who seek Him in gladness of heart and who can say with the spouse of the Canticles: "Draw me: I will run after Thee the odor of Thy ointments." [1]

Lay aside for a time all other books of spiritual reading, until you have grasped all the teachings of this Manual. The old saying: *"Timeo hominem unius libri,"* (I fear the man of one book) is applicable here, for the devil fears a man who only reads one book until he masters its doctrines and understands their application to his thoughts, desires, words and actions. When you take up the book with the intent of perusing it as a spiritual exercise, read slowly and pause from time to time in order to scrutinize your conscience whether you have not hitherto omitted to practice what you are learning. This should be observed with regard to the means of perfection, the obstacles to it and the observance of the moral and theological virtues.

There is no longer any need for me to tell the reader that the science of the perfection is the science of the saints and that, as the health of the body is not depending upon the quantity of food we take, but on the amount we can properly

[1] Cant. i. 3.

digest, likewise the supernatural life of the soul is not quickened and holiness is not obtained by reading much, but by reading carefully and attentively, and by seeking what, through it, we may appropriate for our guidance in our daily conduct. Spiritual reading supplies the food for meditation, which should move us to adopt what is most salutary for the health of the soul and reject whatever may injure it, and as the reader should now have become convinced of his weakness and spiritual necessities, he will have recourse to prayer and the means of perfection to strengthen himself against all the enemies of his eternal welfare.

If this little work be instrumental in leading one soul to a better knowledge of God and to a greater devotion in His service, I will consider myself well repaid for publishing it.

THE AUTHOR.

ANALYTICAL INDEX

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In this Index the Roman numbers refer, the first, to one of the four parts of this Manual; the second, to the article; the third, to the chapter, and the Arabic number to the page.

A

Adoration, see Acts of Religion.
Adulation, see Affability.
Advice of directors as a means of overcoming Satan's temptations, see Temptations of the devil, p. 302.
Affability, which propriety imposes, is a virtue that inclines us to treat everyone with courtesy, consideration and condescension, but with due regard to his and our condition. Rudeness or asperity and moroseness are opposed to affability by defect, and adulation or flattery by excess. III—VI—Appendix, p. 426.
Afflictions, Tribulations, see Patience and Conformity.
Almsgiving, see Works of Mercy.
Ambition, see Vainglory and Presumption.
Anger, see Meekness.
Aridities and Spiritual Consolations, see Devotions.
Aridities. Aridities during meditation may be caused by our own indifference and coldness in the service of God, or they are trials of our faithfulness, for Our Lord often gives sensible consolations to beginners, and withdraws them when they have advanced a little towards perfection. If beginners remain faithful to God after these trials, greater graces will be bestowed upon them to reward their fidelity. It is easy to serve the Lord in the midst of spiritual consolations, but Christian fortitude is required to remain faithful in aridities. Instead of omitting a meditation because of aridity, the pious Christian must summon all his courage to continue the salutary practice of meditating, relying upon God's help to perform it to the best of his ability. I—V—p. 60. Causes of aridity: (a) The usual cause of aridity is the neglect of one's duties or carelessness in performing them. (b) As explained above, aridity may also be a trial sent by God. (c) Pious souls suffering from aridity and from a reluctance to meditate, in spite of all their efforts to overcome the latter, may, with the consent of their director, abandon meditation for a short time, but they should resume its practice as soon as they experience that meditation increases their love of God and a desire to serve Him with greater perfection. I—V—pp. 60, 61.
Asperity, see Affability, p. 427.
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B

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Canon Law with regard to Novices and Religious, see Introduction, p. 13, *et seq.*
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Charity. Charity is a divine virtue which inclines the soul to love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God. Charity, like all supernatural virtues, is infused into the soul with sanctifying grace, for then the Holy Ghost comes to dwell within us. Through charity man participates in the divine nature. Charity supposes that we love God above all things, but charity, to be perfect, requires that we love God for His sake or because He is worthy of all our love. Whereas our intelligence is limited; we cannot give to God an adequate love proportionate to His greatness and goodness, but our charity is perfect, if we love Him because He is infinitely amiable beyond all our comprehension. Our charity is imperfect if we love God for our sake or because He is good to us. The proper of Infinite Goodness is to communicate itself to others and this partly explains the creation of men and angels. Perfect love of God, which we should strive to obtain, does not exclude the imperfect love or the love of God for our sake. The two should reciprocally react upon each other and strengthen each other, for Infinite Goodness is the source and foundation of both. Charity also establishes a friendship between God and man, for if man loves God, he is loved in return. Through charity or the love of God, we participate in the charity that is in God, who is charity, and we abide in Him and He in us. This union through mutual love enriches man on earth and entitles him to a more perfect union with his Infinite God in the realms of His glory. With charity all our actions become supernatural and meritorious for heaven, and without it, they are at best but natural virtues and profit nothing. Through charity the soul becomes an object of complacency in God's sight, for then it is His own image, enriched by His divine gifts. The means to obtain charity are: 1. Prayer, for God alone can grant His greatest gift to man on earth, and prayer will secure it, for He is more inclined to bestow it than we to receive it. 2. We should destroy within us all inordinate self-love, which smothers and finally extinguishes the fire of divine love in our hearts. Self-love leads to the contempt of God, whilst true contempt of self glorifies Him. Self-love is the source of all the vices, with pride as their queen, and it is so rooted in us that we cannot entirely eradicate it even after many victories. The combat against self-love ceases only with death. 3. Frequent meditations

on the motives which should impel us to love the Sovereign Good are very efficient means to increase charity in our souls. All we know of beauty and loveliness is but a faint shadow of God's infinite perfection, and if we now weigh the goodness of a person by his gifts, God is also infinitely good to us, as He places Himself, the Infinite Good, within our reach; for we are called to the possession of Him for all eternity. Add to this that we owe to God all that we are and all that we have; but the more efficient motive of our love is found in the charity of God, who offered up His only Son to redeem us from sin and hell. 4. To the means already explained, we must join all the spiritual exercises and other means of perfection, the practice of the moral and divine virtues, and such works and acts that will increase the love of God in our soul. The following exercises tend directly to increase and perfect charity in us: (a) *Love of complacency.* This exercise is based on God's infinite perfection. How can we but sincerely rejoice in the knowledge of our heavenly Father's wisdom, power, majesty, holiness, goodness and justice? He has in His own perfect nature the reason of His existence and is, therefore, everywhere and eternally the self-same. Moreover, we are bidden to trust that we shall possess Infinite Goodness and participate for an endless eternity in our Father's possessions, as His sons and coheirs with Christ. Complacency in God's infinite beauty and loveliness leads to contemplation, which enkindles and inflames still more the fire of charity in our hearts and procures such heavenly delights in ardent souls that they never grow tired of them and sigh for them when they are deprived of them. (b) *Love of preference.* This love results from the knowledge of the infinitely perfect Being, for we esteem God for what He is. This love is essential to charity, for it is wicked and unreasonable to esteem ourselves or any other creature as much as God. *Tender love,* which consists in sensible affections and soft emotions of the heart is not essential to the love of preference, but those affections are not to be despised if they move one to generous deeds or to greater devotion. This love of preference has three degrees: 1. He that is determined to lose all earthly goods and life as well, rather than to commit a mortal sin, has reached the first degree. 2. He that is resolved rather to suffer the loss of all things and life itself, than to commit a venial sin, has arrived at the second degree, and 3. If, besides, one despises those losses in order to follow the evangelical counsels, or to be more like his Model, our Savior, he has arrived at the third degree. (c) *Love of benevolence.* This love consists in wishing to all those we love tenderly, all the good they themselves may desire, and this benevolence is found in true friendship, as well as in inferiors, who sincerely venerate their superiors. God by right demands the subjection of His rational creatures and by giving it, we contribute to His external glory. As devoted children of the best

of fathers, we should all aim to make God better known, better served and more tenderly loved. When the love of benevolence is ardent, we call it zeal. It is zeal for the honor and glory of God and for the salvation of souls that calls countless men and women from their homes, relatives and friends, to sacrifice their lives for the spiritual welfare of their neighbor in foreign lands. Zeal brings forth numberless martyrs of desire, if not in deed, but there is a zeal that should devour every Christian, to wit: The zeal to reclaim sinners from their evil ways, to stop abuses and to lament them, when we cannot stop them. (d) *Love of contrition.* This love consists in the sorrow we feel at the sight of our sins and of the sins of the whole world, by which the Divine Majesty is outraged. Zeal for God's honor and glory turns into sadness when one sees God contemned or forgotten. Sin is the only real evil of this world, and to form a true concept of the heinousness of mortal sin, we must transport ourselves in thought among the damned in hell or, better still, on Calvary within sight of the Divine Victim of sin, expiating man's iniquities and effacing with His blood the ignominy directed by an ungrateful world against the God of all goodness. But the good God be forever praised, for He has left us in the sacrifice of the Mass, the same sacrifice as that of the Cross, wherewith we may compensate Him with overflowing abundance, for the honor and veneration denied Him by man. Benevolent and devoted Christians will have recourse to it in their zeal for God's honor and glory and in their love of contrition, because of man's ingratitude. IV—III—I—pp. 502-519.

Chastity. Chastity is a virtue which inclines one to abstain from all illicit carnal pleasures. There are three kinds of chastity: that of virginity, of widowhood, and of the marriage state. Celibates, widowers and widows, who are not bound by any vow of chastity, must abstain from carnal pleasures only until they enter the married state. Marriage is honorable, being intended by God for the conservation of the human species, but continency and virginity are more conducive to perfection. Virginity which consists in the firm will to abstain from all voluptuousness, whether licit or forbidden, is the most perfect state. The pre-eminence of virginity is well established in Holy Writ: it is confirmed by history, for nearly all the saints have chosen the state of virginity. A closer union with God is the privilege of chaste souls, whilst the slavery of impurity, the vice opposed to chastity, leads numberless people to eternal ruin. The pure of heart may well be compared to the angelic spirits, and, in a sense, they surpass them, as the latter have not to overcome the evil inclinations of the flesh, to which the former are exposed. III—VIII—pp. 428-432. The means to preserve chastity are: (a) To shun the proximate and, as far as possible, the remote occasions of unchaste temptations; (b) to seriously consider the truths that unite man to his God, the Supreme Good; but in order to reach a true complacency in the

all-holy God, and in order to esteem rightly the reward He offers to the pure of heart, perfect detachment from ourselves and all that is not God is indispensable; (c) to study the Holy Scriptures which contain the holy law of the Gospel and teach us heavenly wisdom; but we should not assume that, after this wisdom has been attained, we are thereby freed from all inclinations to voluptuousness and can escape its temptations; and finally, (d) to strive to obtain by prayer the angelic virtue of chastity, for it is pre-eminently a gift that God alone can bestow. To prayer we should add spiritual reading, meditation and the frequent reception of the sacraments of Penance and of the Holy Eucharist. III—VIII—pp. 432-436.

Cilices, see Sense of Touch.

Conclusion, pp. 583, 584.

Concupiscence of the Flesh, see Sense of Touch.

Concupiscence of the Eyes, see Sense of Sight.

Confession. Confession, or the sacrament of Penance, is a means of both actual and sanctifying graces. It is not necessary that one should be in the state of mortal sin to receive the salutary affects of the sacrament of Penance. If one be in the state of grace when he receives the sacrament of Penance, he receives an increase of grace, as well as the forgiveness of the venial sins, which he confesses or for which he has a proper contrition, but Penance was mainly instituted for the forgiveness of mortal sins, for venial sin can be forgiven without the sacrament of Penance. We should confess frequently, because we sin frequently, for owing to the great frailty of our nature, rigorous attention to things supernatural relaxes, and thus even religious and devoted hearts cannot avoid every sin. It is highly important that we should avoid, as far as possible, all occasions of sin, whether they come from without or from within. With this object in view we should (a) first, take care of our interior dispositions in order to preserve purity of heart, and the second care relates to purity of intention in all our actions. Purity of heart, as a fruit of frequent confessions, consists in the affections of the heart, which can be reduced to these four: love and fear, joy and sadness, and in order that these affections may be the means of avoiding sin, we should in all things conform our affections to the spirit of Christ and to His holy doctrine. The spirit of the world is opposed to the maxims of the Gospel, and, therefore, the pure heart will fear and detest all that the world loves and desires so ardently. Frequent confession procures purity of heart, because it changes and corrects, if needs be, all the affections of the heart through holy resolutions, aided by God's grace and frequently renewed in the sacrament of Penance. Purity of intention is also a requisite for the perfection of our acts, for the morality of an act depends not only on the act itself, but also on the end we have in view. Our lives are largely made up of occupations in them-

selves indifferent, and purity of intention renders them virtuous. We neglect also, through carelessness, many opportunities of virtuous deeds, and through frequent confession, all we do will be perfected by our good resolutions. Frequent confession again makes the penitent more circumspect, with regard to the dangers that lurk about, and more careful to avoid the wiles of Satan, to resist his evil inclinations and the contagion of the world. (b) The graces attached to the sacrament of Penance makes it easier to avoid our past faults and errors and to practise all the good which our state of life will permit. (c) Penance as a sacrament has another advantage, if it be frequent, and that is, that the priest, who sits as a judge in the sacred tribunal, is also a physician to prescribe proper and effective medicines for the cure of all our spiritual ailments. Penitents who aspire to perfection will also find in their confessors sure guides to direct them in all their undertakings. I—IX—pp. 115-120. Qualities of a good confession: 1. It should be humble; 2. It should be sincere, that is, it should conform to the facts disclosed to our mind by careful examination of conscience; 3. It should be entire, for the integrity of a confession follows from the penitent's sincerity in confessing his sins as they appear to him; although venial sin need not be confessed under pain of sin, penitents should, nevertheless, be advised to confess their venial sins as well as their mortal sins, first, because it is the best means to avoid them in the future and, second, because the penitents who do not confess their venial sins are precisely those who least of all think of expiating their sins by virtuous deeds. We may add that if fear, shame or negligence prevents one from declaring all his venial sins in the confessional, his progress in virtue can be but slow, and again, as in the case of physical maladies, a small wound may lead to detect a dangerous sickness. I—IX—p. 129. A general confession, including all the mortal sins of one's life, is obligatory, if a penitent has in the past made one or more sacrilegious confessions and if he finds it practicably impossible to determine when he made the first bad confession or when he began again to make good confessions. A general confession is advisable whenever some considerable fruit may be expected from it. It is also advisable for all those who enter upon a new life, like the married state or the religious state, as well as for those who are about to undertake a long and perilous journey. Finally, a general confession not of one's whole life, but limited to one or more years, is very useful to all, and an annual confession should be recommended to all those who desire to make rapid progress in virtue or who aim at perfection. I—IX—p. 133.

Constance, see Fortitude.

Confidence in God as a means of victory in temptations, see **Temptations of the devil.**

Contrition (Love of), see **Exercises of Charity.**

Contrition, required in the Sacrament of Penance, see Frequent Confession. I—IX—p. 120—Perfect Contrition, p. 123.

Conformity. Conformity to the will of God is charity practised in all our thoughts, affections, desires, words and actions. It contains all the other acts of the love of God, for it is founded on the fourfold love, but in its turn it perfects them all. God's will is principally made known through His Commandments, irrespective of the reward of punishment, but God's will is also manifested in the events of our life. In the physical world all the occurrences are the effect of laws of which God is the Author, and if they be detrimental to our material interests, it would be wicked to complain, for God willed them. As to the effects of responsible causes as free agents, such as men and demons, God cannot directly will the sinful deeds of His rational creatures, but He may will their evil effects to fall on the wicked He wishes to punish, and upon the just He wishes to try or save from greater punishment in the next world. Motives of perfect conformity: 1. God has an absolute dominion over all created things. Even on earth, ownership by production, purchase or gift is recognized, and all irrational creatures obey God, shall rational man alone refuse Him submission? 2. God is our Redeemer, for He bought us from the galling yoke of Satan with the blood of His only Son and thus by right God is our Master and we His slaves. 3. God is the best of Fathers and His innumerable gifts demand grateful deeds in return. He is our Friend, and He ceases not from befriending us. Can friendship endure without reciprocity of gifts? 4. Conformity is a sacred duty because it tends to our greater perfection. We owe it to God because He imposes it, and we owe it to ourselves because it increases our merits upon earth and greater happiness forever in heaven. Few actions in our lives are essentially holy, but conformity sanctifies all our indifferent acts and occupations. Conformity assures our present happiness, for fortunate indeed is the man whose desires are always fulfilled and by willing what God wills, all whatsoever happens corresponds to that man's desires. In tribulations, which a wise man regards as corrections from a benign Father, we make great strides towards perfection, for afflictions and tribulations purify the soul, make it more like our Divine Redeemer and hasten after death its entrance into heaven, to which the least defilement bars the way. IV—III—II—pp. 520-536. Conformity to the will of God is indispensable to the acquisition of a perfect Christian life, although God manifests His will in all the physical effects of the laws that govern the universe, God is free to suspend those laws in view of the actions of man or for whatever cause of which His wisdom is the sole judge. God, as explained, cannot will the sins of man, although he may will the consequences of the sin to fall on the sinner He wishes to chastise, or upon the just He wishes to try, and, therefore, He has determined from all eternity not to deprive man of his freedom

of action. In order to acquire conformity, based on an ardent love of God, (a) we must conquer the disorderly appetites of the flesh and the rebellious passions of the soul. (b) Conformity should be our constant practice in all our daily actions, even in the most indifferent occupations. (c) We must make in all that we undertake or do the sacrifice of our will, the greatest sacrifice we can make. (d) True conformity makes man resigned to trials and tribulations, whilst he preserves thereby perfect equanimity of mind and peace of heart, and through it, all the passions of the soul are kept under restraint or directed into their proper channel. (e) This blissful state, in which the passions of the soul become an aid to man in subjecting his whole being to God, would bring back, as far as possible, the state of innocence in which Adam and Eve were created. (f) Equanimity of mind and peace of heart beget a holy indifference to all that is not God or leads not to God. (g) The last advantage of perfect peace consists in that the soul is thus disposed to listen attentively to the whisperings of God's Spirit. How important it must be for those who strive for perfection to keep the peace of mind and heart that they may not lose the benefits of the divine inspirations! IV—III—III—pp. 537-549.

Contemplation. Contemplation is of two kinds, one active and the other passive. Passive contemplation can have no place in this Manual, because it is not subject to rules from which general conclusions may be drawn. Therefore, we confine ourselves to contemplation as a direct result of our efforts, and as such, contemplation differs from meditation, (a) in that it has God and His infinite perfection as a direct object, for the object of our contemplation is Divine Truth as far as we can understand it and all truths to be realities must conform to the intellect of God. But we cannot conceive the simple Truth which is identical with God's essence, but we see Him in His works and in His teachings and from these we ascend to the consideration of His attributes. (b) In meditation man considers attentively any religious truth and reflects seriously thereon to excite in his soul proper affections. In contemplation we dispense with all discursive operations of the mind and fix our sight on God Himself and His divine perfections. (c) The principal end of meditation is to excite pious affections in the heart and through contemplation, the ardent love of God is increased in intensity, purified and perfected. (d) Meditation requires effort and careful preparation but in contemplation all labor is eliminated. In what does contemplation consist? Contemplation is an imperfect vision of God and of His infinite perfections, for contemplation consists in an act of the intellect that steadfastly beholds the divine perfections, and to this intellectual sight the intellect is moved by pure love of God, since ardent love desires and seeks the object of its tender affection, and is only at rest when it has found what it seeks. Love makes us seek God and, having found Him, we

enjoy the sweetness of His presence by tender and ardent complacency in His beauty. There are four degrees in the contemplative life: The practice of the moral virtues, or other means of perfection and their acts, the contemplation of God's works in the created world, and, finally, contemplation of God and of His attributes. It is plain that the works of God, especially in the redemption of man, directly lead to contemplation. What makes a pious soul have recourse to contemplation? Nothing else than the ardent love of Him, whom she has chosen for her Spouse like the beloved of the Canticles, but contemplation is also delightful in itself for two reasons, and the first regards the operation of the intellect, for it is pleasurable to act according to one's nature; and the second regards the object of our contemplation for it is delightful to contemplate what we love. If it is a great happiness to taste how sweet the Lord is, there is another great advantage in contemplation, for if love induces us to contemplate, contemplation again increases our love of God, so that when the love of God is once kindled in our hearts, it seeks the divine fire and the divine fire itself makes it burn with greater intensity. Although we cannot extol above measure the utility of contemplation, it is not necessary to salvation, nor is it absolutely required for our advancement in spiritual life, and if pride or anything else, besides the love of God, induces us to contemplate, then either contemplation is not true contemplation, or it is likely to bring disaster upon the soul. Therefore, it is advisable, before anyone attempts to contemplate, that he first consult his confessor or spiritual director. What kind of love of God is required to excite in us a desire of contemplation? We will learn later that there are several kinds of love of God: the love of preference is enjoined upon all Christians, but only in its first two degrees, to wit: To love God more than all created things, even more than our life; but the third degree, namely, to prefer the loss of life than not to follow the evangelical counsels is required only of those who freely make the vow of observing them. The love of friendship does not differ essentially from the love of preference, but it is a more intimate love and disposes one more than the love of preference to a state of contemplation. The love of benevolence springs from the love of friendship and consists in a constant good will to do whatever God desires of us. This love also disposes to contemplation. The love of contrition is a sorrow of the soul because of our offenses committed against the Divine Majesty, and this also disposes, although indirectly, to contemplation, but the love of complacency, which consists in a knowledge of God's infinite amiability and loveliness is the direct cause of contemplation. The love of complacency is the most perfect love of God, because it conforms to the love God has for Himself, and, therefore, it is the purest love we are capable of here upon earth. Nevertheless, all the different kinds of love may become perfect, if the motive be one or all the perfections of God, for

thus they become, like complacency, imitations of the divine love, the love of God because of His infinite perfections. I—VII—pp. 845, *et seq.*

Contrition. Contrition is the grief of the soul and detestation of the sin committed with the purpose of sinning no more. Contrition is composed of three parts: Sorrow for the sin committed, detestation of it and the firm purpose or fixed resolve of sinning no more—sorrow and detestation can be distinguished in theory, but the distinction is useless, because he that has the one, has the other. Perfect contrition has for motive the goodness or any other perfection of God, whilst imperfect contrition has for motive our spiritual welfare in this life or in the next. Contrition, or grief, for having offended God, who is worthy of all our love, is called perfect, because there can be no detestation for sin more perfect than the one God Himself has for it. The happy effect of the love of God for His sake, which produces perfect contrition, is such that no matter how guilty a sinner may be, if he is capable of such perfect love of God that he detests his sins because they offend a God so infinitely good, at the very moment all his sins—as to their eternal punishment due to them—are forgiven forthwith, grace is infused into the soul, and with it all the virtues and gifts of the Holy Ghost. Nevertheless, although contrition, if perfect, forgives one's sins, he is still obliged to confess them in his next confession if they be mortal and have never been confessed before, p. 112. Contrition includes the firm purpose of amendment, for it would not be sincere without it. Nevertheless, if one should forget to make the firm purpose of amendment, it would not invalidate the penitent's contrition, for the fixed resolve is implicitly or virtually contained in a sincere sorrow. In the fixed resolve, never more to offend God, is contained also the determination to avoid all the near occasions of mortal sin and contrition would be of no value if one thinks of those occasions of sin and neglects the resolution to sincerely shun them. I—IX—pp. 120-126. Qualities of a good contrition. When there is question of mortal sin, contrition should be (a) universal, that is, it must extend to all unforgiven mortal sins; (b) contrition should be supreme or sovereign, that is, one should grieve more for mortal or venial sin than for any other evil. If one is not conscious of having committed a mortal sin when he goes to confession a virtual contrition, consisting in a desire to receive the graces of the sacrament of Penance, is sufficient, provided the penitent confess some venial sin, as an obstacle to a closer union with God. (c) Contrition for mortal sin should be supernatural, that is, the reason for one's detestation for sin should come from revelation. With Confession, one of the following motives is sufficient: the loss of heaven, the fear of hell, and the heinousness of mortal sin. Contrition for venial sin must also be supernatural, and one of the following motives is sufficient when one goes to confession: venial sin offends God; it deprives the sinner of more

abundant graces; it retards a closer union with God; it leads to mortal sin; it prevents for a time the soul's entrance into heaven; it subjects the sinner to the pains of Purgatory, etc. (d) To the efficacy of contrition also belongs the firm purpose of amendment, and the shunning of the near occasion of mortal sin. As to venial sin, it is practically impossible to avoid all the occasions of it, and, therefore, it is sufficient, if the penitent propose to diminish the number of his sins or to avoid one species of venial sins. I—IX—pp. 121-129.

Corporal Works of Mercy, see Works of Mercy.

D

Decrees and statutes regarding the entrance of postulants and novices into a religious community, see Introduction, p. 14.

Decrees regarding the profession of religious, see Introduction, p. 15.

Decrees of the code regarding the property of novices and professed religious, see Introduction, p. 17.

Desire. Desire of perfection is one of the great means to reach it. Fervent and sincere desire acts upon the inferior part of the soul by exciting in it ardent affections, and these affections react upon the will and strengthen it to employ greater efforts for the possession of the longed for good. In order to excite in us a great desire of perfection, we should consider the obligation imposed upon us to tend towards it, and this obligation is frequently taught in Holy Writ. The obligation of tending to perfection is imposed upon all people and, therefore, all should strive to excite in their hearts a stronger desire to reach it. It is a sin for lay people not to desire or strive for perfection compatible with their state of life; but in the absence of a formal contempt of perfection, they only commit a venial sin. As for religious who fail to tend towards perfection, they act contrary to their vows, and they can hardly be excused from mortal sin, especially so, if this indifference towards their perfection be habitual. From the moment novices enter the novitiate, they are like apprentices who learn their trade, and from that moment they must strive for the state of perfection. Perfection is not demanded of them when they are admitted to their vows, but after making their vows, they are bound to use their best efforts to arrive at perfection. I—II—p. 27.

Despair causes the loss of hope, see Theological Virtues.

Despair, see Hope; qualities of the virtue.

Devotion. Devotion, considered as a virtue, is an inclination to promptly and joyfully undertake whatever belongs to God's service, and they who consecrate themselves and their lives to God, are properly called devout. Strictly speaking, devotion is not a special virtue, for it perfects every action and, like sugar, sweetens what is most bitter. Charity and devotion differ from each other like fire and its flame, but devotion adds to charity promptness and sweetness, so that ardent, joyful and peaceful charity is

nothing else but devotion. Spiritual consolations surpass all earthly joys, and although devotion does not consist in them, they are not to be despised, as long as they add promptness to devotion, whilst aridities, in which the devout soul is deprived of all spiritual consolations, are schools of saints, for to remain devoted to God, in the midst of aridities, is superhuman and heroic. Spiritual consolations may lead to vainglory and aridities to sadness and despair, and, therefore, it behooves those who strive for perfection to maintain true devotion in the absence of consolations and in all sorts of trials, whatever be their origin. The cause of very troublesome aridities should be investigated, for if one attaches his heart to consolations or despises them through an excessive confidence of being able to dispense with them, he himself is most probably their cause. Again, the good Lord often withdraws all consolations from them, who abuse them through sloth in God's service, instead of becoming more charitable and more careful in the observance of their duty. Aridities may also come from the devil, who is bent upon creating in devoted souls a disgust for spiritual exercises, and then, a magnanimous resignation is required; finally, aridity may spring from a too great attachment to worldly things, which creates disgust for heavenly things, and then, detachment from worldly goods, pleasures and glory is the only remedy and cure for the spiritual ailment. Even too much solicitude in the administration of temporalities may cause the loss of all spiritual consolation and of devotion itself; and in that case serious thought on the transitoriness of all things upon earth in order to dispel all superfluous care and anxiety becomes necessary; but of all the obstacles to devotion and to its sweetness and peace, the most deplorable is an affection to venial sin, coupled with an unwillingness to forsake what offends God slightly. If such affection exists in any soul, the total ruin of devotion and loss of charity is sure to follow. III—VI—pp. 397-405.

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin. 1. The Catholic Church distinguishes three kinds of worship, that of *"latria"* or the worship due to God as the Supreme Being; that of *"dulia"* due to the servants of God whether angels or saints now reigning with God, but among all the blessed in heaven, the Blessed Virgin, because of her great dignity as Mother of God and because of her great merit, deserves a special worship which is called *"hyperdulia."* Since the Blessed Virgin is truly the Mother of God, because she gave birth to Jesus, our Saviour, who is both God and man, a singular relationship exists between the three Divine Persons of the Blessed Trinity and herself: She is the Mother of the Son; she became the Spouse of the Holy Ghost, who formed the body of Christ in her womb out of her most pure blood, and she became thereby the adopted Daughter of God the Father, for she co-operated with His designs of redeeming man, when He created the soul of Christ in the Incarnation. Respect, submission and

obedience are the main duties of the sons and daughters of the Blessed Virgin, who showed her reverence for the Father's will when she said to the Angel of the Annunciation: "Be it done to me according to thy word." To the Father is attributed the creation of the soul of Christ; the Son alone became man and the Incarnation is attributed to the Holy Ghost, because it is a work of love and holiness, and whereas He gave fecundity to Mary's virginal womb, we rightly call Him her Spouse. Nevertheless, the three Divine Persons shared in the work of the Incarnation, but the Son alone was made man. I—XII—p. 175. II. The Blessed Virgin in view of her Divine Maternity was enriched with all the graces of her exalted dignity. Therefore, Gabriel saluted her with the title, "Full of grace." This raised her in dignity and holiness far above the angels and saints of heaven, to whom honor and veneration are due, but if we honor them as the Church honors them, we fulfill our obligation. I—XII—p. 178. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin is a sign of predestination, and it promotes and assures our advancement toward perfection. Christ is truly the Son of Mary, and that means that, as her dutiful Son, He must grant all that she asks of Him. She is called the new Eve, for she is the Mother of supernatural life, as Eve was the mother of the human race. III. The clients of Mary are sure of their salvation, because she is all-powerful and she dearly loves all those whom her Son loves, that is all those for whom He sacrificed the last drop of His blood; but they who honor the Son by honoring the Mother, have the first right to her all-powerful prayers. She is also our Mother by her Son's last will and testament, but to insure her maternal care, we should choose and honor her as our Mother. But some one may ask: will not all the saints in heaven protect their clients? True, but the efficacy of their prayers rests solely on the mercy of God, whilst Mary's claim to being heard rests on rights which are accorded to her by nature and the Gospel. IV. The same argument proves that devotion to Mary is the surest means to advance towards perfection, for her Son demands our spiritual progress and she loves what He loves, and she loves it for our good. She is the channel through which all graces flow to us, and if we have not felt the effects of her material protection, we must attribute it to our lukewarmness in her service and want of confidence in her assistance, or possibly, to our lack of co-operation with the graces she has obtained for us. V. Mary's intercession will conquer Satan, who is especially enraged against those who honor the Mother of Christ and put their trust in her. But we need not fear his ruses, for to Mary is given the power to crush the head of the infernal serpent. The sole invocation of her name will put the devils to flight. VI. We owe our Heavenly Queen a sincere devotion and a willingness to do what is most pleasing to her and to her divine Son. This service contains two things: one is to avoid in her honor all deliberate

sin and the second is to practise with the utmost perfection the virtues of our state of life. We owe our Heavenly Mother the most childlike confidence in her maternal love and protection, and even sinners are not excluded from her maternal care, if they confidently invoke her and desire to abandon their evil ways, for the Church calls her the Refuge of Sinners. We should trustfully implore her to obtain for us the gift of final perseverance, a gift which no one can merit, but assiduous prayer alone can obtain it. Finally, we owe our Heavenly Mother a tender, affectionate and filial love, second only to the love of her Son, Jesus, and this love should be proven by public and private acts. Let us remember the many claims she has to our affections. No earthly mother has ever made the sacrifices she, the best of mothers, made for her children on earth. The following practices of devotion are highly recommended: Often to meditate on the dignity and prerogatives of our Mother, to imitate her virtues, to choose and cherish her as our Mother, to recite daily some prayers in her honor, such as the Holy Rosary, etc., to visit her shrines, to adorn her altars with flowers, especially in the months of May and October, to join some confraternity established in her honor, and to observe other practices which sincere veneration and love will suggest. I—XII—pp. 178-192.

Director. The necessity of a director in order to advance towards Christian perfection, if one can be had, is taught us by the masters of spiritual life. Reasons for it: (a) no art, no science can be learned without a master; (b) many doubts and perplexities are thereby removed; (c) it prevents imprudences and excesses; (d) without a director one cannot escape all the ruses of Satan. Qualities of a good director: (a) virtue, (b) learning, (c) experience. A director must thoroughly know his penitent properly to prescribe for him. I—III—p. 38, *et seq.*

Discernment of Spirits, see Appendix, pp. 569-582.

Distractions, aridities and temptations during meditation. Neither distractions nor aridities nor temptations are sufficient reasons to omit our ordinary meditation. There are two kinds of distractions: voluntary and involuntary. The first must be shunned as irreverences toward God and the second, being unavoidable, are not sinful, and only add to our merit, if we strive to continue to meditate in spite of them. I—V—p. 58.

Divine Praises, see Acts of Religion.

Dominion (absolute of God), see Conformity.

Dominant Passion, see Passions of the Soul.

E

Eucharist, see Holy Eucharist.

Examination of Conscience. A proper examination of conscience is a confession made to God. The daily examination may be considered as a remote preparation for a sacramental confession and conduces much towards the observance of all its requisites. It is

also a means of perfection in that it discloses to us our perverse nature, for the body wars against the spirit, and the soul cannot be trusted, because of its pride and the passions that blind it, and memory together with the imagination, moved thereto by the passions and the suggestions of the evil one, combine to its ruin. The warfare we have to sustain against the enemies of our salvation, ends only with death. The great advantage of the examination of conscience over sacramental confession lies in that it can be undertaken in all places and at all times; but two examinations should be practised daily by those who aim at perfection: one at noon on the besetting sin, and one in the evening, on all the sins and imperfections of the day. Manner of making a good examination: it consists of a preparation, the examination proper, and the resolution with the sincere sorrow for the sins disclosed in the examination. Rules regarding the particular examen on our dominant passion. Method proposed by St. Ignatius. I—X—pp. 136-150.

F

Faith. Faith is a divine virtue by which we believe what God has revealed. The motive of our belief is the wisdom and truthfulness of God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. The motive of our belief must be distinguished from the so-called motives of credibility, for the latter regard the conviction that God has revealed this or that truth. The Church teaches us or proposes for our belief all revealed truth and we believe all that God has revealed, because He can neither deceive nor be deceived; and since the Church is our divinely appointed teacher by Christ, our faith to be reasonable and absolutely certain, needs no other motive or foundation. Nevertheless, we may seek additional reasons to strengthen our conviction and our faith; these motives or reasons are either direct proofs that the dogma of our faith was revealed by God or establishes beyond reasonable doubt that the Church is authorized to speak as God's oracle in all matters of faith or morals. These motives may be reduced to these seven: miracles and prophecies, appealed to by the prophets of the Old Testament, by Christ and His apostles, as a proof of their divine origin; the holiness and sanctity of the Commandments; the eminent sanctity and profound erudition of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church; the astounding rapidity of the propagation of the faith among civilized and barbarous nations, and of their conversion; the heroic constancy of the martyrs in the midst of prolonged and most cruel tortures, and, finally, the perpetuity of the Church in spite of her powerful enemies, who have vowed her destruction. These motives, although convincing in themselves, are not sufficient for an act of faith: the evidence needs to be communicated to the will, and if the will refuses its consent, the soul cannot say: I do believe. The word of God, the motive of true faith, makes our faith certain and infallible, as

well as meritorious; for we honor God by believing Him, because we then subject both intellect and will to God. Faith may exist without charity, but it is imperfect without it, for charity completes and perfects all virtues. Our faith is lively when we practice what it teaches; otherwise it is dead. Faith is (a) necessary unto salvation; (b) it adds to our happiness in the present life, as it makes us support with resignation all trials and sufferings; (c) it is the kindly light that guides man in all circumstances of life; (d) with Baptism it makes us children of God and members of Christ's mystical body; (e) with the spirit of faith all our actions are founded on supernatural motives, and as a consequence faith is the foundation of hope and charity, as well as of a perfect life, for faith engenders hope in God's goodness and promises; hope begets fortitude; humility brings aid from God in all spiritual needs, whilst charity, based on faith and hope, gently urges man on to seek in all he does the good pleasure of his heavenly Father. All the above advantages only belong to a lively faith, for faith alone without good works will not avail anyone. St. James proves that dogma of revealed truth and argues in support of it from several examples taken from the Old Testament. The doctrines of Luther and Calvin that faith alone will save us is opposed to the teachings of Christ, of His Apostles and of all the Fathers of the Church. Our faith must be firm and it cannot be firm without that simplicity which makes us accept all that God has revealed without investigating whether the things that are revealed conform to our reason or not. Another quality of faith is fortitude, which gives to the man of faith undaunted courage to suffer all evil, yea death itself rather than to forsake his Christian belief. The means to acquire a lively faith are: 1, the first means is all-powerful prayer, for faith is a gift of God which we cannot acquire like a natural virtue; 2, by making frequent acts of faith we strengthen our faith, and this truth is especially applicable to the mysteries that surpass all our understanding, while St. Teresa and others found in the mysteries of the Christian religion, a convincing argument in favor of their faith; 3, the third means is found in the practice of good works, for virtuous deeds done in the state of grace merit an increase of grace and this increase enlivens, quickens and strengthens indirectly our faith, as well as all other virtues; 4, an important practical means is found in choosing faith as our constant light and guide in all our undertakings. Two truths often disregarded or not, seriously considered, will compel us to make that resolution: we were created by God for a supernatural end, to wit: to serve Him in this world and to be happy with Him in the next, but we lost that destiny through Adam's sin and were restored, even more abundantly, to all our supernatural privileges through Christ, the Model of those who desire to live a holy and perfect life. In temptations against faith, it is usually best simply to ignore or

banish them, but if they become troublesome, one may make an act of faith in general without adverting to the particular truth against which the temptation was directed. When thereafter one goes to confession, the penitent should simply examine himself to find out whether during the temptation he suspended his judgment regarding the particular dogma of faith against which the temptation occurred; if not, he need not confess it, but if he be in doubt, he had better confess it, as it appears to him. As to temptations in aridities against the goodness and mercy of God, holy souls should suffer with resignation and await the good pleasure of God to remove their aridities, remembering that our Savior also was troubled with aridities in His agony in the garden, when He exclaimed on the Cross: My God, My God, why hast Thou abandoned Me? IV—I—pp. 454-475.

Fear, see Passions of the Soul.

Fear of God, see Qualities of Hope.

Fidelity to Promises, see Veracity.

Foresight regarding future temptations, see Temptations of the devil.

Fortitude. Not all contempt of danger is virtuous, for if it incites one to perpetrate a crime or determines one to act with greater courage and intrepidity in a sinful deed, the energy displayed increases the guilt. Fortitude is that Christian constancy which makes man surmount the difficulties encountered in the practice of his duties. In this wide sense fortitude enters into the practice of every virtue and, therefore, it is properly a stimulant and guardian of virtue. There are three degrees in Christian fortitude judged from the standpoint of the sacrifice one makes; for the greater the sacrifice, the more meritorious the deed. One may sacrifice the goods of fortune, or his bodily strength, or his intellectual faculties or the affections of his heart, or his honor or reputation or finally his life. Besides the above sacrifices there are two heroic degrees of fortitude: one is found in the saints and the other in the Christian martyrs. The first consists in subduing by mortifications and the macerations of the flesh, the inordinate and intellectual appetites and in vanquishing the world and the devil by fleeing from whatsoever may sully one's purity of heart and mind. The combat is long and desperate, and, therefore, victory is more glorious. The second degree belongs to those who sacrifice their life for the faith or for any Christian virtue. We obtain the virtue of fortitude by a childlike trust in God, to which we should join an ardent love of God. Fortitude is also strengthened by frequent victories over our evil inclinations and by foreseeing the struggles which may assail us. Finally, meditation on Christ's and the saint's heroic examples of fortitude is useful towards instilling in our hearts a desire to imitate them. III—I—III—p. 319-326.

Friendship, see Love of Parents and Friends as obstacles to perfection.

G

Goodness of God, see Third Means to Acquire Charity.
Gratitude. Gratitude is a virtue which inclines man kindly to remember favors received and to repay them, if possible. It pleases the donor and usually brings new favors, and always from the Giver of all good gifts, whilst ingratitude dries up the source of new favors. III—VIII—pp. 424 *et seq.*

H

Hair Shirts, see Sense of Touch.
Hearing (Sense of). Faith comes through hearing, which procures also many temporal advantages, but if life enters through it to the soul, death also; for it is criminal to listen to what offends God, such as blasphemy, ridicule of holy things, slander, contumely, etc.; but detraction and criticism of the doings of others deserve principally our attention, because people think so little of it. Detraction wounds the detractor, the listener and the discredited neighbor. A detractor is more culpable than a sneaking thief, and often causes enmities. A willing listener is as guilty as the detractor. Charity or justice oblige us to keep a neighbor from sinning, as well as to preserve the good name of another. A good rule is to have nothing to do with detractors, but if a detractor is to be feared, change the conversation or show that the detraction is displeasing. Self-love inherent to our vitiated nature makes many listen to the defamation of a neighbor and to approve in their heart whatever is said derogatory to his good name. II—I—V—pp. 227-231.
Hypocrisy, see Veracity.
Holy Communion, see Holy Eucharist.
Holy Eucharist. Holy Communion is the principal means by which charity is enkindled in the soul: it is the end of all the sacraments and it unites us intimately to God, and in that union perfection consists. Our faith teaches us that in Holy Communion Our Lord is present whole and entire, as He is in heaven, and our union with Our Lord is so intimate that it may be compared to two pieces of wax melted together or to fire that inflames other objects near it. As the food we eat acts upon the body in a quadruple manner, likewise the Holy Eucharist: 1, it sustains the supernatural life of the soul; 2, it strengthens and fortifies the soul; 3, it repairs the supernatural losses sustained by the soul; 4, it delights pious souls. I—XI—pp. 151-161. Acts which should precede Holy Communion: 1, communicants must be free from mortal sin, but an affection for venial sin displeases Our Lord; 2, they should approach the Holy Table, (a) with a lively faith; (b) with humility; (c) with ardent love; (d) with a great desire or longing to receive so great a Guest. I—XI—pp. 161-166. Decree of our Holy Father, Pius X, on Daily Communion, *ibid.,* p. 167. Spiritual Communion, *ibid.,* p. 172.

Humility. Humility is the foundation on which rests the sacred edifice of our spiritual life, or it may be said to be the substructure on which Christian perfection is built with faith as the solid foundation stone of all virtues, of holiness and sanctity. There are two kinds of humility, that of the mind and that of the heart. True knowledge of one's self engenders humility of mind, which in its turn begets humility of heart. All that man is or has is due to the liberality of his Maker and in a strict sense it is only lent to him until the day of accounting. The more one has received, the greater should be the humility, for his debt is proportionate to the liberality of his Creator. This is clearly set forth in the parable of the talents and it applies to the natural as well as to the supernatural advantages of each individual. Humility demands not of us that we should impute to ourselves defects which we have not, nor should we be blind to the gifts that come from God's liberality. It is sufficient that we attribute nothing that is good in us to ourselves, that we glorify God for the good we find in us, and that we seek no praise from man because of it. In practice we should also welcome dishonor. Humility of heart resides in the will and consists in the contempt of ourselves because of the knowledge of our nothingness and our dependence on God. Humility of heart is increased by our consciousness of the bad use we have made of God's gifts and of our many offenses against our celestial Benefactor. Humility towards neighbors consists in such contempt of self that we esteem ourselves inferior to others. One may without culpable exaggeration esteem himself lower than the greatest criminal by attributing to God's grace one's freedom from abominable crimes. In humility of heart towards our neighbor we find several degrees: (a) we should esteem ourselves inferior to others, as we have seen, and that is the first degree. (b) The second degree consists in bearing patiently the contempt of others and the third degree lies in bearing joyfully all humiliations. Humility in speech: of thyself speak neither good nor evil, to which we should add: never excuse thyself from blame unless duty compel thee. Humility in one's conduct consists in acting in accordance with the low estimation one has of himself and in doing the will of another rather than one's own; to seek the humblest occupation and the lowest place in any gathering, unless these be determined by custom or rule or by the orders of superiors. Unsought and unexpected humiliations being in no wise voluntary, are hardest to bear. Humility in one's bearing refers to the modesty preserved in dress, looks, gestures, etc. Christians should prize highly and greatly esteem humility, because no virtue can exist nor can progress towards the acquisition of any virtue be made without it, for abundant graces are indispensable to spiritual progress and "God resisteth the proud." These five practices regard humility towards God: 1. In temptations of pride and vainglory place yourself in God's presence and refer all good to

Him. 2. Rejoice that God is all and you nothing. 3. Be assured that if God had been so liberal towards others as He has been towards you, they would have been more faithful in co-operating with His gifts. 4. Be sincerely sorry for having attributed any good to yourself. 5. Determine henceforth to seek only the honor and glory of God. To humility belongs modesty. One is said to be modest when his humility, simplicity, patience and meekness together with all the other Christian virtues are so blended with moderation as to give no offense to anyone, and when all these virtues are conspicuous in his dress, bearing, gait, gestures, words and looks. III—II—pp. 335-353.

Hope, see Theological Virtues. The virtue of hope inclines us to trust that God will give us eternal life and the means to obtain it. Eternal life is the destiny for which we were created, and although forfeited through Adam's sin, it was restored to us through Christ; and that trust, which regards also the means to reach our destiny, is based upon His promises. *Cf.* Motives of Faith. Desire and hope differ only in that hope refers to things which are not easily attainable, and in that supernatural grace is indispensable to an act of hope. The object of our hope is two-fold: the primary and ultimate object of our hope is the possession of God and eternal happiness, and the secondary object of our hope consists in the means, by which we can gain our ultimate destiny. Our natural craving for happiness can only be satisfied in the next life in the possession of the Infinite Good, and as to the means of salvation, they comprise sanctifying and actual graces, and all that is necessary or useful to obtain from God the aid in the struggle for our eternal happiness against our vitiated nature and the enemies of our salvation. Temporal goods in relation to our eternal salvation are of three kinds: some are rather an obstacle, such as riches and honors, and to these we should be indifferent; others are useful, if properly employed, such as health, learning, etc., and these we may desire and ask God in accordance with His holy will; and, finally, there are others which are only called temporal, because they are given us in the present life, but by nature they are spiritual, and such are all the graces and favors that tend to our eternal welfare. The latter we must ask of God, and they form the four last petitions of the *Our Father.* Motives of our hope. The principal motive of our hope is God Himself: He is omnipotent, faithful in His promises, all-good and all-merciful. The greatest of God's omnipotent, all-wise, bountiful and merciful works is the work of our Redemption, which we can only attribute to the infinite perfections of our incomprehensible God. (*Cf.* Charity and Goodness of God.) Our hope should be firm, because it rests on the omnipotent goodness of God, and without God we can do nothing. Therefore, we cannot rely on ourselves. Neither can we base our hope on any other creature, but we may ask others to intercede for us, and we may rely on our own prayers if we pray with the

proper dispositions; but prayer, the sacraments and the intercession of the saints are the instruments by which we reach our bountiful God, our Father in heaven, from whom all good things for the body and the soul come. Our hope would be vain and criminal without a holy life, for to expect salvation without good works is rash and contradicts all the teachings of the Gospel, and if one perseveres in his sin and, nevertheless, maintains a rash expectation of salvation, he is guilty of presumption, a sin against the Holy Ghost. Besides, if one has sinned mortally, penance is absolutely indispensable and who can with certainty assert that his sin has been forgiven. There are two general causes of presumption: the desire to continue a life of sin, and sloth, which is a reluctance to take hold of the means of salvation. Presumption is a lesser sin than despair. It is also presumptuous to rely upon one's power to overcome the temptations to which one freely exposes himself and it is insanely imprudent and rash to rely upon a death-bed repentance if thereby one rejects the present means of salvation. Our hope of reaching eternal destiny should be accompanied by a salutary fear. Hope without fear leads to presumption and fear without hope to despair. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and makes us keep God's Commandments. Despair consists in the loss of all hope in God's mercy, a fearful sin only a little less heinous than willful infidelity and hatred of God. Man despairs through the conviction that God cannot or will not forgive his sins. If he denies also God's goodness and mercy he sins against the virtue of faith, as well as against hope. The sin of despair is of all sins the most pernicious. Nevertheless, if a despairing man can be induced to consult the priests of the Church, who have been appointed by Christ the physicians of souls, the despairing man will most probably regain his trust in God and save himself from endless misery, through the consideration that all the sins of the world are but a fragile spider's web, which the slightest wind tears asunder, compared to the infinite mercy of God. Involuntary emotions of despair are not sinful, but as soon as one detects within himself any inclination to mistrust God's goodness or mercy, the dangerous sentiment must be overcome by a perfect trust and confidence in God's bountiful condescension towards the repenting sinner. Salutary effects of hope: 1. It enables man to practice the most arduous duties of a Christian, and when pious souls begin to feel a disgust for prayer and other pious exercises, it is often attributable to a sluggish hope, like our body's indisposition is often due to a sluggish digestion. Then hope must be revived by meditations on the infinite goodness of God and on eternal happiness in heaven in union with our good God; for hope like all other virtues needs practice; 2. Hope, being revived, leads to greater promptitude, alacrity and devotion in God's service; 3. Hope makes man despise the sufferings and tribulations of this life, for the tribulations of the present life cannot be compared

to the glory of the life to come; but Christian heroes do more than that, for they rejoice in their sufferings and humiliations, not only because of the greater reward attached to their patient endurance, but principally because through them they become more like their Model, Jesus Christ. Practical suggestions concerning the virtue of hope, which if observed will tend to the practice of all virtues and to our advancement towards perfection. IV—III—pp. 476-501.

I

Indifferent acts become meritorious through the vow of obedience and through conformity. See Motives of Obedience and of Conformity.

Indifference as to all that happens in the physical world around us, see Conformity.

Infidelity causes the loss of faith, see Faith.

J

Justice. The virtue of justice inclines man to give to each one his rights. It is a beneficent virtue. Justice and peace are inseparable companions, and happiness is their reward. It contributes to the welfare of the individual and of society at large. Means to acquire justice: (a) since a desire of money is the root of all evil, cupidity must be subdued; (b) in matters of justice no faults should be considered slight, for he that is unjust in little things, is also unjust in greater things; (c) injustices are not condoned without restitution, if it be possible. III—I—II—pp. 315-318.

L

Liberality. Liberality inclines us freely to part, within the bounds of reason, with our goods and possessions for any praiseworthy end. Avarice and prodigality are two vices opposed to it. Conditions of true liberality: the end should be honest; liberality must be reasonable; order should be observed with regard to the beneficiaries and the giver must be a cheerful giver. See Appendix to Obedience. III—VII—pp. 425 *et seq.*

Longanimity. Longanimity, or long-suffering, partakes of the nature of magnanimity and patience, but regards especially future evils of long duration or rather a coveted good long delayed, and if besides much labor is required, constancy comes to the aid of longanimity. III—IV—p. 380.

Love of God, see Charity.

Love of Self, see Second Means to Obtain Charity.

Love of Parents and Friends as Obstacles to Perfection. By serving God we reach our final destiny and in order to execute God's will in a most perfect manner, we should embrace the state of life to which he calls us by a special vocation. If this vocation demands

the abandonment of the parental roof, sons and daughters must sacrifice their affections for parents and relatives that they may gain thereby Christ's promise of eternal life. Parents, who for worldly motives oppose their children's vocation resist God's holy will. Friendships between persons of the same taste or occupation, or friendship that has amusement in view, may be good or bad, but the friendship between proper parties that has for object their mutual spiritual advancement is rare and found only among saints. There is another friendship that rests upon natural advantages, such as beauty, affability, courteousness and gracefulness, but that friendship is fraught with great danger, especially so, when it combines with similarity of tastes and inclinations. The remedies against such sinful affections are first promptly to break off the friendship and, secondly, to disclose everything relating to it to one's confessor, because if he finds out that the friendship is principally based on personal beauty, he will warn the parties that it will inevitably lead to unchaste thoughts, if not to impure actions. When now this same friendship, based on physical beauty or comeliness or gracefulness, exists between persons of an opposite sex, the affections it engenders are sure to degenerate into an impure love, and who can foresee the fatal consequences of familiar interviews between such intimate friends, who are to each other like fire and straw. The following remedies should be carefully weighed: 1. Young people must seek God's light to detect the danger in all intimate friendships and His strength to shun it. 2. Vigilance united to prayer is indispensable. 3. This is especially applicable to young women seeking employment in offices and stores. 4. Distractions are necessary to certain natures. Let them seek them among those of their own faith and in societies under ecclesiastical supervision in their parish. As to those who seek to live holy lives, even in the world, when circumstances prevent them from abandoning it altogether, let them add to their efforts to live perfect lives, works of temporal and spiritual mercy in order to increase still more their merit before God. II—V—pp. 279-291.

Love of Riches. Excessive love of riches causes much anxiety to the soul, to wit: Labor of mind in acquiring them, fear of losing them and sadness in their loss; but this does not apply to a moderate desire to provide for one's future needs. Cupidity is the root of all evil. Riches enable the wicked to satisfy their vilest passions. From love of wealth and indifference to the needs of others, oppression of the poor and of the laborer, lawsuits, perjury and even murder originate. Covetousness is not always the vice of the rich alone, but is also found among the poor and even among religious. The main remedy against cupidity is the spirit of poverty, which consists in desiring only the necessaries of life and in not being too solicitous even about them. Cupidity is not easily detected, except when great unexpected losses occur. Those responsible for the welfare of others

may properly labor for the acquisition of what belongs to their own or their wards' state of life, but they should be resigned to God's will in all that happens, and should contribute according to their means to all good works. They that are free from responsibilities, if they strive for perfection, must follow the Savior's advice: "If thou will be perfect, go sell what thou hast . . . and give to the poor." In order to obtain the spirit of poverty, the grace of God is indispensable and prayer becomes imperious. We should also seriously consider the evil consequences of cupidity, meditate frequently on the voluntary poverty of our Savior and on the transitoriness of earthly goods. Unexpected reverses may rob us of our wealth and when we are no more, others will reap what we have sown. II—III—pp. 254-262.

Love of Neighbor, with the reasonable love of self, constitutes the second Commandment and is only secondary to the love of God. God has commanded the love of neighbor as a strict precept and the love of God and of neighbor are therefore inseparable. The love of neighbor covers a multitude of sins, insures pardon and everlasting happiness, for God considers, as done to Himself, the good we do to our neighbor. The Savior also inculcates the love of our enemies and of all those that offend us. There are three degrees of perfection in the love of enemies: 1. He who suffers with patience and resignation all injustices, humiliations and affronts, fulfills the law and has attained the first degree. Meekness in affronts preserves and increases charity, and often gains an offender's good will. 2. He who besides wishes his enemy all the good he may desire, has arrived at the second degree, and 3. He who sacrifices his comfort, his honor or worldly goods and, above all, his life for an enemy, has attained the most sublime degree. Love can go no further. Jesus has taught it by word and example. IV—III—IV—pp. 550-557.

Lust, an obstacle to perfection, see Sense of Touch.

Lying, see Veracity.

M

Magnanimity. Magnanimity is a virtue that tends to great deeds within the bounds approved by sound reason. It is opposed to pusillanimity and cowardice, as well as to presumption and ambition. Magnanimity springs from a passion for great things, but the virtue restrains the magnanimous from ambition and presumption by their contempt for riches, honor, praise and glory, and by their trust in God. Of what sacrifices and deeds of valor is a magnanimous Christian not capable, when he has before his eyes the valorous deeds of charity displayed in the lives of many saints and martyrs, but especially in the example of the Man-God dying for His guilty creatures! P. 379. (*Cf.* Qualities of Obedience and its Appendix.)

Magnanimity, see Resignation in aridities; see Devotion.

Martyrdom is the fruit of perfect obedience, see Obedience.

Martyrs. A martyr is one who willingly makes the supreme sacrifice of his life for the faith or any other Christian virtue. See Sacrifices through Fortitude, p. 322.

Meditation. Meditation has for foundation spiritual reading. In meditation we revolve in our minds any Gospel truth to excite in us pious affections. The faculties of the soul, intellect, memory, imagination and will are exercised in meditation. In it we apply the meaning of any particular truth to ourselves and to our daily obligations. Pious affections are the main fruit of meditation, and the following sentiments should seldom be omitted in meditation: detestation of sin; contempt of self, submission to God's holy will and a fixed resolve to comply with our obligations, specifying one or two of these. The fixed resolve to amend the past, forms also an essential part of meditation, but we should avoid undetermined or general resolutions, and the number of resolutions should not exceed one or two. Meditation is not necessary unto salvation like vocal prayer; nevertheless, those that are bound to strive for perfection must also use the means thereto, and, therefore, religious are bound to take hold of it, as one of the greatest means to advance in spiritual life. The principal parts of meditation are: 1. Preparation; 2. Meditation proper, which is nothing else than a serious reflection on any truth of the Gospel to excite in us pious affection, and by these to induce the will to make proper resolutions for the future; 3. Thanksgiving and prayer in order to obtain from God the strength to comply with the resolutions made during meditation. Remarks: In our meditation we should confine ourselves to the consideration of two or three points, deduced from the main truth; but if one point be sufficient to excite in us proper affections, there is no need to dwell upon a second. This regards also the practical resolutions, which, as we have said, should not exceed one or two at most. I—V—pp. 50-58. As to distractions, aridities, and temptations during meditation, we here refer to them in their proper places. *Ibid.*, p. 58, *et seq.*

Meekness. Sadness and anger are not always sinful; they become so when they exceed the limits of sound reason. Sadness is the least dangerous of the two, because the note of weakness, in sadness, diminishes its guilt, for then humility is not entirely lost. In anger one confides in his own strength to expel the evil that causes it, and through anger he abandons humility of mind and of heart. From anger to hatred and from hatred to revenge, there is but a step. Excessive anger makes of a rational being a brute animal, for it communicates itself to his exterior, and what a frightful picture an angry man portrays in his mien, gestures and behavior! Much less can he be called a Christian, for he despises Christ's teachings and example, and anger easily leads to mortal sin, to insults, strifes, enmities and revenge. To overcome the vice of anger one should repay rudeness with courtesy, meanness with kindness, coldness with attention, slights with re-

spect, indifference with devotion and so on; for to return anger for anger adds fuel to the fire; nevertheless, prudence and caution are required, for the angry man may reject the favors obtruded upon him, especially so, if he suspect one may be bent on his correction. To preserve meekness, meditation on the life of the meek Jesus, is the most effectual means. Another means is found in foreseeing the occasions of anger and in resolving beforehand upon our conduct; and the third means consists in resisting the first impulse of angry feelings. Even superiors should seldom resort to anger in punishing, but before correcting sternly—if that be necessary—they should await the proper time for correction, that is, when their agitation has ceased and calm has been restored in their hearts. III—IV—pp. 370-379.

Mendacity, see Veracity.

Mental Prayer, see Meditation.

Mercy, see Works of Mercy.

Modesty (the Virtue of), see Humility towards the end.

Modesty (Exterior), see Sense of Sight, pp. 223-226.

Moral Virtues. Moral acts are deliberate acts that conform to or are opposed to the rules of right reason, and in that sense they are virtuous or bad. If they are neither, they are called indifferent acts. Here we consider only the supernatural moral virtues that tend to our spiritual welfare. Charity cannot be attained without the practise of the moral virtues. The study of the moral virtues are mainly intended for those of the illuminative state. Part III—Introduction, p. 308. Moral virtues depend more or less on the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance, but they differ from them in many respects. See Introduction to Humility.

Mortification. Mortification is much derided by infidels and most Protestants. After the sin of Adam mortifications are imposed as a duty that we may reach our eternal destiny. See Fortitude; also Sensual Appetites.

Mortification in eating and drinking, see Temperance.

Mortification of the Flesh, see Sense of Touch.

Motives of Conformity to God's Holy Will, see Conformity.

Motives of Faith, Hope, Charity, see the corresponding virtues.

N

Novitiate. The novitiate is a time of probation that precedes the entrance of a candidate into religious life. Novices are usually not admitted into the novitiate until they have passed a short time of probation as postulants. In institutes of perpetual vows, six months of postulate are at least required to enter into the novitiate, which cannot be shorter than a year. The postulate and the novitiate do not differ essentially from each other, but those that enter into the novitiate are supposed to have severed themselves from the world and its attractions, and have begun to practice the virtues of the religious state. In order that novices may ascertain

the reality of their calling, the following means should be observed: (a) Frequent and fervent prayer; (b) The knowledge of their vocation is made easier, because they learn in the novitiate the difficulties they will encounter and the nature of their obligations, as well as the spiritual advantages attached to their calling; (c) But by far the best and more certain means for novices to ascertain their vocation is the approbation of their director and of their legitimate superiors, and in order that confessors and superiors may arrive at a proper decision, novices should acquaint their spiritual director with the state of their conscience and their superiors with all that regards their physical and intellectual capacities, and should also show a willingness to help their director, as well as their superiors to arrive at a just judgment in their behalf. See Introduction, p. 3, *et seq.*

O

Oaths, see Acts of Religion.

Obedience. Obedience is one of the potential virtues of justice, because it regards the right of superiors to their inferiors' submission. Thus, the virtue of obedience inclines one promptly to execute the will of his superiors. There are two general sources of authority, human and divine, and of the former there are three classes: civil, ecclesiastical, and domestic. Obedience to every legitimate authority is inculcated by God in Holy Writ: the obedience of subjects to their civil rulers, of children to their parents, of the faithful to their bishop, of servants to their masters, of wives to their husbands. Obedience leads to charity, which with devotion completes and perfects it. One may obey God through fear, but even then the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and the fear of punishment and the expectation of reward is based on revelation, and if those selfish motives make one more prompt and constant, in God's service, ulterior graces will not be denied him to attain a more perfect obedience. Obedience is the mother and guardian of all moral virtues, and in that sense it is a general virtue. As a special virtue, it regards only the observance of the commandments of God and of the orders that emanate from those who wield authority from God upon earth. Obedience tends to the temporal welfare of society and to the spiritual and temporal welfare of the individual. There can be no peace nor happiness without it. The greatest sacrifice we can make is that of our will; hence, the merit of obedience, which Christ's example confirms. The qualities of perfect obedience are: *alacrity* or sincere willingness in obeying whether the task imposed be agreeable or not, or more or less salutary and meritorious; *simplicity,* that is without deliberation on the utility of the task and as a consequence in a spirit of blind obedience, like that of Abraham; *interior delight* or *cheerfulness,* which springs from a certainty of pleasing God. This quality leads to magnanimity, heroism and martyrdom. Cheerful obedience leads to

martyrdom, but it is not attainable without perfect charity and entire devotion. The motives for perfect obedience are: 1. Through it, indifferent acts are meritorious for heaven, and religious, by obeying their superiors and their rules, practice also the virtue of religion, because of their vows, and although their rules may not bind under pain of sin, a deliberate and willful transgression of the rules can seldom be excused from venial sin, because of the contempt of the authority, which prescribed or approved them. 2. He who obeys is certain not to err, except if a command be evidently sinful. This conviction is a great boon to timid souls inclined to scrupulosity. 3. The example of Our Lord should teach all, and especially those who tend to perfection, the esteem they should have for this great virtue. 4. Perfect obedience to one's confessor or director begets the habit of obedience. III—VII—pp. 406-422.

Obstacles to Perfection. The main obstacles to our spiritual progress are the world, the devil and the flesh, and by the flesh we mean man composed of body and soul. Man's nature being vitiated by original sin is a serious obstacle to his perfection. The world with its maxims contrary to the teachings of the Gospel and the seductive and alluring examples of worldlings are also obstacles to spiritual advancement, especially for those who cannot abandon the world. Finally, the devil is our sworn enemy and the more to be dreaded because by his evil suggestions he uses the world and the evil inclinations of our nature as tools and allies. II—Introduction, p. 193.

Occasions of Sin to be avoided, see Temptations of the Devil; also the Five Senses; also Remedies to preserve Chastity.

Oral or Vocal Prayer, see Prayer towards the end.

P

Passions of the Soul. The world, the devil and the concupiscence of the flesh would be less formidable enemies of our salvation if the soul itself were not vitiated by original sin, and if the affections or inclinations of the soul, called passions, were subject in all things to reason. The passions, whether good or evil, are often called the heart of man. The evil passions not being subject to reason, are great obstacles to perfection and, therefore, they must be subdued. When passions and right reason co-operate toward good, the merit is increased, but when passions precede the intellect they obscure it, and thus they diminish the merit of the act. 1. We cannot eradicate the passions, but, with the grace of God, we can control them. 2. Uncontrolled passions hinder the practise of the moral virtues. 3. We encounter the passions in all we think or do, especially through self-love. 4. Unless the passions be controlled, they gain in strength. They readily ally themselves with the sensual appetites. We conquer our passions: (a) By striving to exterminate them all and by resisting their first impulses. A proper remedy to be recommended is found by

choosing the opposite virtue to the passion we aim to combat and by practising it in all our daily intercourse with others. (b) Subdued passions are not dead and, therefore, it behooves us to watch them and keep them under control. Instead of combating a violent passion, it may be more expedient to turn it into its proper channel. Thus, love of perishable goods may be changed into love of the everlasting joys of heaven; sadness, because of great losses, may be changed into sorrow for sin, and so on. (c) Our dominant passion deserves our most earnest attention and serious efforts to combat it, for it is our weakest point and, therefore, we are most likely to be attacked through it by our arch-enemy, Satan. To it we should direct all our prayers and all our spiritual exercises, the sacraments we receive, and even the mortifications we practise. (d) Finally, we should not always remain on the defensive until we are attacked: we must ferret out the enemy in our daily examinations, and find out how we are progressing in our warfare against our besetting sin. Our motto should be: No quarters until the enemy is exterminated. II—II pp. 240-253.

Patience. Humility, patience and meekness are virtues closely allied to each other. The two last named are like two sisters, and humility engenders both. The three depend on the virtue of temperance, but when heroic efforts are required to resist the passions of pride, sadness and anger, fortitude comes to the aid of the three virtues. Sadness is caused by an evil that is upon us, and patience moderates sadness. Patience is needed by every Christian, for all people are subject to afflictions in this valley of tears. Tribulations, especially those that come from God or from the ill-will of our neighbor, are useful: 1. They are a remedy for our spiritual ailments, for the heart of the sinner is usually softened by adversities; 2. Severe calamities alone seem able to arouse the lukewarm from their lethargy; 3. Even saintly souls derive much benefit from afflictions; 4. Through suffering we become like unto our Model, the Man of sorrows; 5. The afflicted Christian will cease complaining and bewailing his lot if he compares his sufferings to those of his Savior; 6. An eternal happiness is in store for them who endure with patience the ills of this life; 7. Pains and sorrows become more endurable through patience. There are three degrees in the virtues of patience: he who suffers without complaint or patiently without feeling sad, has reached the first degree; he who desires tribulations, if it be God's will, has arrived at the second degree, and he who desires pains and afflictions that he may become more like his Savior, has attained the third degree. There are sorrows that are of God, such as the sorrow for one's sins and imperfections, and that other sorrow which made the Royal Prophet deplore his pilgrimage on earth because it kept him apart from the God he loved so tenderly. The means by which holy patience may be acquired are: (a) affectionate prayers; (b) a holy life; (c) it is well to foresee the

possible afflictions that may befall us; (d) the seeking counsel of one's spiritual director in great afflictions. Warning: distressed souls should not leave off their spiritual devotions and spiritual exercises. III—III—pp. 354-369.

Penance, see Frequent Confession.

Perfection. Absolute perfection is not of this world, for it belongs only to the elect. Perfection is enjoined upon all men, no matter what their state of life is. Christian perfection consists primarily in the love of God and, secondarily, in the love of neighbor for God's sake. There is then a perfection that we can attain in this world with God's grace, a perfection according to man's vitiated nature. Perfection is charity, for charity is nothing else than the perfect compliance with the will of God. Moral virtues and the evangelical counsels are means of perfection, like prayer and the sacraments. If absolute perfection is not of this world of what perfection can and must we aspire? Perfection lies between a continual act of homage to God—and this divine perfection belongs solely to the elect—and between that love of God above all things which is necessary unto salvation. Thus, the relative perfection for which we should strive, consists in loving God and serving Him as much as our nature, condition and state of life will permit. This relative perfection may be called Christian perfection. Among those who aspire to perfection we find three degree; those that begin, those that advance and those that have arrived at perfection, and these three degrees correspond to the *purgative,* the *illuminative* and the *unitive* state. I—I—pp. 21-26.

Perfection attained through conformity to God's Holy will, see Motives of Conformity.

Perseverance. Perseverance is a constant and permanent habit of doing good in spite of great obstacles. Final perseverance is a special gift, which God bestows to enable us to remain in the state of grace until death. Prayer alone can obtain that signal gift, p. 381.

Poverty, the Spirit and Vow of Poverty. Extreme poverty, like riches, is an occasion of evil, but the spirit of poverty, or voluntary poverty with the proper spirit, is a virtue to be recommended to all. The spirit of poverty can exist in the midst of opulence, as avarice is found even among the poor. The rich who manage their wealth as stewards for the needy are truly poor in spirit, but the perfection of the virtue of poverty is primarily attributed to them who divest themselves of all they possess, in imitation of the Savior, especially so if they add to voluntary poverty the vow of poverty. The spirit of poverty does not solely consist in the contempt of riches, but also in the detachment from worldly goods in order to seek without hindrance heavenly riches. The vice opposed to the spirit of poverty is avarice or cupidity, a capital sin, which is the fruitful mother of many sins and is said by St. Paul to be the root of all evil. The virtue of

poverty finds its complement and perfection in the vow of poverty, by which one renounces even the desire to ever possess anything. Besides, the vow is in perfect accord with the teachings and life of our Savior, who is our perfect Model and the Model of perfect justice. It further agrees with the practices of the early Christians, and with the spirit of the early Church, under whose auspices religious communities were established to render the observance of the spirit of poverty by the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience more practical and secure. The spirit of the world is in direct opposition to the spirit of poverty. The perfection of the virtues is open to rich and poor alike, and depends not on the more or less riches one possesses and abandons, for he that leaves all, be it little or much, in reality abandons much. Religious who defraud their order or community, or wilfully destroy its property, commit a venial or mortal sin according to the loss sustained by the community; but something more is required to constitute a mortal sin in religious than for theft committed by the people of the world. Religious who sin against the virtue of justice, also sin against their vow of poverty. The means to preserve the spirit of poverty are: to meditate frequently on the transitoriness of all earthly goods and on their uselessness for heaven; to strive to imitate the poverty of Jesus; to render thanks to God for whatever we have, as we all have more than we deserve; to keep from undue admiration for the riches and comforts of others, for it leads to covetousness; to shun all attachment to things in our possession, whether they are owned by us or are only given us for our use. III—IX—pp. 437-450.

Prayer. Prayer and meditation are closely connected like two inseparable sisters. In the second we seek what is wanting in us, and we find or obtain it through prayer. Prayer is not necessarily expressed in words, for a simple thought directed to God with a desire to obtain what we need is already a prayer. I—VI—p. 65. The necessity of prayer rests on three truths: the providence of God, our dependence upon Him, and the will of God, who usually only grants His aid to those who ask it. (a) The providence of God in all things created is well established in Holy Writ, for not a hair falls from our head unless God wills it. (b) No matter what may be the temptations that assail man, he always remains a free-agent. (c) Experience and the decisions of the Church corroborate the teachings of Scripture. (d) Besides the concupiscence of the flesh and the passions of the soul, there are still two other enemies of our salvation: the wicked world and the wiles of satan. Both conspire with our vitiated nature towards our ruin, and without the aid of God, how can one ever hope to be able to overcome all the enemies of his salvation? Prayer is the only means always available to repel the poisoned darts of Satan, the shameful appetites of our corrupted nature and the false maxims of the world. I—VI- pp. 65-69. Prayer

is necessary to salvation, for God wills that we should ask His favors, if we wish to receive what we need. This is clearly contained in all the exhortations we find in Holy Writ to induce us to pray and to pray always. Prayer is the life of the soul, for it alone will obtain for us sanctifying grace, in which the spiritual life of the soul consists. The efficacy of prayer rests upon the promises of our Savior, often repeated with emphasis. The only thing that can prevent us from obtaining from God what is useful unto salvation, is our unworthiness; but the Christian should remember that God is more disposed to forgive than to punish. Yea, more disposed to grant what we ask than we are desirous to obtain. The efficacy of prayer is founded on the veracity, fidelity and omnipotence of the living God, who has promised to give us whatever we pray for, unless we pray for what might be hurtful to us. I—VI—p. 69. Qualities of prayer: 1. That we pray with humility; 2. With confidence; 3. With perseverance; 4. That we ask for ourselves; 5. The things necessary for salvation; 6. With piety or devotion; 7. In charity; 8. With attention. In vocal prayer we distinguish two kinds of attention, one virtual and the other actual. Actual attention is often impossible and, therefore, virtual attention is sufficient. This consists in placing ourselves in the presence of God at the beginning of our prayer, with the intention of obtaining from God all we will ask. Even he who disposes himself to pray, and is moved thereto by the grace of God, has a virtual intention, even if thereafter his mind should wander and be continually distracted. I—VI—p. 71, *et seq.* As to vocal prayers to be said by religious, called the office, all that is required is that they should strive to pronounce the words properly and fix their attention either on God or on things relating to their eternal welfare, or on anything that leads to or refers to God. If such office was begun with the intention to pray or to fulfill one's obligation, one complies with his duty in spite of distractions. A more perfect intention consists in paying attention to the meaning of the words, and this is preferable, because it is apt to produce pious affections in the soul. There is a third intention more perfect still and it consists in reflecting on the favors we ask of God and in occupying our minds with God Himself. I—VI—pp. 19-83.

Prayer, see Sacrifice.

Prayer in Temptations, see Temptations of the Devil.

Preparation before Temptations, see Temptations of the Devil.

Presence of God. Recollection, as employed by the masters of spiritual life, is nothing else than an effort of the memory to regain the consciousness of God's presence, which has been temporarily lost, either through distractions or other occupations. Thus, when we speak of the presence of God, as a means of perfections, we mean the consciousness that God sees us, hears us, watches over us, takes an account of all our actions and is attentive to our prayers. I—VIII—p. 103. The state of recollection was found necessary as one of the remote means to insure a fruitful meditation, and if it be properly practiced, it is by itself a sufficient

preparation for meditation. It is also indispensable for the exercise of spiritual reading, and as a preparation for prayer, it insures proper attention. The usefulness of the presence of God is amply proven in examples taken from the physical world, as when Christ calls Himself the vine and His faithful the branches thereof. As the branches are attached to the vine, so likewise we must be attached to God by remembering His presence. Recollection, or the remembrance of God's presence, is necessary to make all our actions meritorious and acceptable in the sight of God, at least in the beginning of every action. It is often enjoined in Holy Writ, as when God says: "Walk in My presence and be perfect. In all thy ways think on Him and He will direct thy steps. Seek ye the Lord and be strengthened." Efficacy of the Presence of God: It is a powerful means to avoid all voluntary sins and many imperfections. This means of avoiding any wrong-doing was already well understood by pagan philosophers, for they imagined themselves to be in company of eminent and good men to keep from doing evil. The exercise of the presence of God is not only a preventative of sin, but a great aid to increase in us the fire of divine charity, since the remembrance of God's presence stimulates a fervent Christian to do all things well under the eyes of his Maker. Recollection procures also directly the love of God in the devoted souls, who have already attained the state of perfection, for it inclines them to a short and amorous contemplation of God's perfections. What is the best manner of placing ourselves in the presence of God? 1. The most practical way consists in an act of faith, by which we firmly believe that God is in us, around us and everywhere, for then we confess that in Him we live, and move and are, as St. Paul expresses it. 2. The second means of placing ourselves in God's presence, consists in representing Him in the interior of our soul, or in considering our soul as a temple in which He loves to dwell. "Know you not," says St. Paul, "that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" 3. A third manner of holding ourselves in the presence of God is to have recourse to the imagination by representing to our minds God Himself, as He appeared to Moses, Abraham, St. Paul and others, or in a burning bush or as speaking from the clouds or from a mist. 4. Others again, are more easily touched at the sight of the Redeemer during His passion, in His agony, when standing before Pilate, or at the "Ecce Homo," etc., and others again prefer the sacred infancy of our Blessed Lord and treat the Divine Infant with the utmost familiarity and tenderest affection. There are several remote means highly recommended, by which we may obtain a high degree of recollection: (a) By mortifying our curiosity or the desire to see everything, to hear everything and to know everything. (b) We should likewise correct the attachments of the heart, of which our imagination is a tool, if not a slave. (c) We should also combat the wander-

ings of our imagination by prompt, peaceful, but energetic diversions, accompanied by humble and ardent ejaculatory prayers. Let us also avoid being troubled or annoyed by distractions. (d) The fourth means by which we may preserve proper recollection is to offer up each action to God before undertaking it. (e) The fifth means to preserve recollection, especially recommended to people constantly employed in worldly affairs, consists in having recourse, once or twice a day, to a solitary place they may entertain their God and be entertained by Him. I—VIII—pp. 103-114.

Presumption, see Vainglory and Ambition.

Presumption, see Hope—Qualities of Hope.

Prevarication, see Veracity.

Prodigality, see Liberality.

Prudence. Definitions of prudence considered. It contains three acts: counsel, judgment and command. The faults by defect against prudence are: precipitation, irreflection, inconstancy and negligence, and those by excess are: the prudence of the flesh, craftiness, ruse and fraud; and inordinate care of temporalities, and an excessive solicitude for the future; but this condemns nowise a moderate care of temporal goods and a reasonable solicitude for the future. Without prudence no virtue can be acquired nor preserved. Means to acquire prudence: prayer, the subduing of the sensual appetites, as well as the contempt of worldly advantages, the serious reflection on our past experiences and the taking counsel of the wise and prudent. III—I—I—pp. 309-314.

R

Recollection, see Presence of God.

Religion. Religion is a virtue that inclines us to render homage to God as the Creator and Preserver of all things. God alone can give to Himself the honor due Him. Man can only render to God a supreme worship and all interior or exterior acts by which God is recognized as the Supreme Being, are acts of religion. Religion then is the most excellent of all moral virtues, because it approaches nearest to God by acts that are directly ordained to honor Him, whilst all other moral virtues tend only ultimately to God's honor, that is because He either commands or counsels their practice. Religion is inferior to the three divine or theological virtues, which have no need of intermediary acts to worship God, like sacrifices or any other virtuous acts of religion, for when the soul believes in God, hopes in God and loves Him, it is in a manner face to face with God or, in other words God is the immediate and direct object of the soul's belief, hope and love. Religion differs from sanctity only because the latter is more comprehensive, for it comprises all the human acts acceptable to God and tending to our eternal happiness. Religion, like charity, persists in heaven. The due worship of God demands the subjection of the body, as well as of the soul; hence

the propriety of interior and exterior worship, and besides, the latter adds fervor and intensity to the acts of the former. It is proper that the universal brotherhood of man should find expression in one and the same worship of the common Father of the whole human race. Nothing can effect a closer visible union between men of the same origin and destiny as one and the same visible sacrifice and the same priesthood. Adoration, prayer and sacrifice are the principal acts of religion and they become obligatory on all who have arrived at the use of reason. Adoration is an interior act of worship by which man recognizes God's excellence and his entire subjection to Him. Since the body should share in the interior sentiments of the soul, it is well to add exterior acts, such as genuflections, reverent demeanor, divine praises, sacred chants, etc. Prayer is an elevation of the mind to God to ask of Him, as the Source of all good, whatever is useful to our temporal or eternal welfare. Sacrifice can only be offered to God alone, for by destroying an offering, we recognize God's dominion over all created things. Sacrifices are, and have always been, universal and this instinct among all peoples proves that God Himself is the Author of all lawful sacrifices. The sacrifices of the Primitive and Mosaic Laws drew their efficacy from the august sacrifice of the New Law, that is, the sacrifice which our Redeemer made of Himself on Calvary by shedding the last drop of His blood for our salvation, and the same sacrifice is renewed daily on our altars in the Mass, for the Victim and the ends of the sacrifice of the Cross and of the Mass are the same. Priests who offer up the Mass are like other Christs and, therefore, should *"Put on the Lord Jesus Christ."* What purity, piety and holiness is then required in Christ's vicegerents! And as to the faithful, they should assist at Mass with the same sentiments, they would experience, if the tragic scene of Cavalry were re-enacted before their eyes: hence, they should offer it with the priest for the same ends for which Christ suffered on Calvary. III—V—pp. 382-394. Vows and oaths are acts of religion. A vow is a promise made to God of something acceptable to Him, but vows should not be made lightly or without due consideration, as in matters of importance they create a serious obligation. Onerous vows and difficult in their fulfillment should not be made without consulting one's superior or confessor. An oath is the calling upon God to witness the truth of an assertion or the sincerity of a promise. There must be a sufficient cause for taking an oath, and, besides, the oath should be truthful and licit. III—V—pp. 394-396.

Religious Communities, see Vow of Poverty and the Introduction to this Manual.

Remission of Sin, see Frequent Confession.

Resistance (prompt) in temptations, see Temptations of the Devil.

Revenge, see Meekness.

Riches, see Love of Riches.

S

Sacrifices through Fortitude, see Fortitude.
Sacrifice as an act of religion, see Religion.
Sadness, see Patience.
Scruples as obstacles to perfection. Scruples are judgments of the mind, which falsely regards an action as sinful or grossly exaggerates the guilt of it. Scruples are not sorrow for sin: the former disquiet the soul and rob it of all peace of mind, while compunction of heart or true sorrow for sins, although it justly afflicts the soul, leaves both mind and heart peaceful. Scrupulosity may be due to one's temperament, that is, to melancholy, or to the envy of the devil, or to a trial from our benign Father. Scrupulosity engenders obstinacy. The devil endeavors to make the laxity of the lax more lax still and timid souls more timid. God often permits scruples to purify the newly converted and to lead pious souls to a high degree of sanctity. According to St. Alphonsa Ligori, there is, besides prayer, but one remedy for scrupulosity, to wit: absolute and childlike submission to one's spiritual director. II—VII—pp. 304-307.
Scruples partly overcome by obedience, see Motives of Obedience.
The Five Senses as obstacles to perfection. *Sense of Touch.* Man is composed of body and soul and the sensual appetites or the concupiscence of the flesh, which originates in the five senses, are serious obstacles to perfection, for of their nature, they obscure the intellect and weaken the will. The five senses are spiritually blind faculties and they must be kept under restraint so that their use may conform to the intention of the Creator, for unbridled sensual appetites, through indulgence, become the most dangerous of all the enemies of our salvation. The sense of touch, more than any other, confuses the intellect and debilitates the will: it is spread all over the body and it engenders the vice of lust, whose daughters St. Thomas enumerates: blindness of mind, precipitation, false judgment, inconstancy, self-love, hatred of God, despair and dread of death and of God's judgment. Lust is a fire that consumes and destroys all the germs of virtue. The remedies against lust are: first, to refrain from touching any one without necessity, including one's self. Secondly, whereas lust is commonly caused by indulgence, we should mortify the flesh and imitate the physician, who cures fever by reducing the temperature of his patients. Thirdly, we should also deny to the flesh what it covets most, and weaken the body by fasts and other mortifications. This doctrine regarding mortifications is preached by St. Paul and by many saints after him, and what else is taught by Our Lord when He speaks of self-denial? Notwithstanding prudence is required in our mortifications, for by excesses we may injure the body and render ourselves incapable of complying with our obligations. Humble prayers and moderate fasts should be resorted to by the Christian to ward off the demon of lust. We should also have recourse to moderate vigils and disciplines, but

such mortifications as hair-shirts, cilices and the like should not be used without the permission of one's director. II—I—I—pp. 195-212.

Sense of Hearing, see Hearing.

Sense of Smell. This sense is the least dangerous of all, but the immoderate use of perfumes offends God slightly, and the perfection demands that we should joyfully support the disagreeable odors we encounter in our duties. II—I—V—pp. 231-232.

Sense of Sight. The sense of sight is the most perfect of all our senses, for the acquisition of knowledge of the exterior world, but it is also the most influential for good or evil, and whereas its sphere of action extends far and wide, and the images it sends to the soul, impress more vividly, than those of other senses, the intellectual and sensual appetites, its danger lies in its perfection. Hence unguarded looks are apt to cause deplorable harm to the soul. This danger is aggravated by the fact that, when we are awake, the sight is always in action, and, therefore, it is freer than other senses from the control of the will. The principal means, which enables one to keep a strict guard over one's sight consists in preserving modesty in one's whole behavior. Modesty is humility in practice in all our exterior actions, provided they are so regulated as not to offend anyone. Thus we should be modest in looks, laughter, gait, in gestures, in dress, in speech, and, in one word, in all our behavior. II—I—III—pp. 221-226.

Simulation, see Veracity.

Spiritual Communion, see p. 172.

Spiritual Consolation, see Devotion.

Spiritual Works of Mercy, see Works of Mercy, p. 558.

Spirits (Discernment of Spirits), pp. 569-582.

Spiritual Director. God has at divers times taken upon Himself the direction of those He had chosen to carry out His merciful designs towards His chosen people, of which we see examples in Abraham, Moses, St. John the Baptist, etc, but when our Savior had established His Church upon earth, and had appointed His apostles to rule over her, it is to them we must have recourse for spiritual advice. This is clearly proven by God's conduct with regard to St. Paul, who was sent to Ananias in Damascus for instruction. All the masters of spiritual life have urged upon their disciples the necessity of choosing a spiritual director to guide them, and St. Bernard teaches that "He who wills to be his own master, becomes the disciple of a fool." There are many reasons why we should choose a director: 1. No art, no science, no trade can be learned without a master. 2. It relieves one of many doubts and perplexities. 3. It prevents imprudences and excesses. 4. Without a director we cannot escape the wiles of Satan. If no proper director can be found, pious souls should place their whole confidence in God, relying on prayer and other good works to be guided by God Himself. The principal qualities of a good director are: he should be upright and virtuous, and

learned, as well as experienced in matters relating to the spiritual welfare of souls. I—III—pp. 38-43.

Spiritual Reading. Spiritual reading is a means of perfection taught us by the saints and highly praised by them, because it engenders pious affections in the soul and stimulates the will to virtuous deeds. There are four spiritual exercises by which we tend to a union with God and all are within our reach: spiritual reading seeks the way, meditation shows the way to it, prayer leads to it and contemplation tastes its sweetness. 1. Spiritual reading is most salutary to all Christians, for numerous examples taken from history prove that a great many people, and among them many saints, owe their conversion and holy lives to the reading of pious books. Pious thoughts gathered from spiritual reading drown the flood of evil thoughts that often assail us and torment especially young people. All reading of pious books cannot be called spiritual reading, for if one has for object the knowledge or the understanding of the truths contained in such pious books, he loses the fruit of spiritual reading, which is not the acquisition of learning, but of piety in sentiment, which ultimately through meditation leads to the love of God and conformity to His holy will. II. The qualities of profitable spiritual reading are: 1. On the part of the reader, purity of intention or the intention to find a means to forsake sin, to advance towards perfection and to honor God by observing His commandments or counsels, and with those ends in view, we shall do well if we commence by raising our hearts to God and by begging His blessing on our exercise. 2. To read slowly and pause whenever a truth may be applied to our conduct or excites in us pious affections. 3. To read profitably, one must read what suits his condition and capacity, and in case of doubt, he should submit the decision to his spiritual director. I—IV—pp. 44-49.

T

Taste (Sense of). The sense of taste was given to man to excite desire for food necessary for his preservation. To eat or drink solely for the pleasurable taste is reprehensible. We should at least have the implicit or explicit intention to act according to our nature, but it is not sinful to experience the pleasurable taste of food or drink, because it is unavoidable. Man is a rational creature, and if he eats to satisfy his appetite, he acts rationally, provided he ceases eating when more food might become injurious, and then he is said to be temperate; but he that refuses additional food because he is satisfied that more food is not required for his bodily strength, is said to be abstemious. Total abstainers are abstemious in regard to drink. Gluttony is the vice opposed to temperance and becomes a mortal sin, if one foresees the serious evil that may result from eating or drinking to excess. It is a capital sin because it leads to spiritual blindness, inordinate mirth, loquacity, scurrility of speech, indecency of behavior, impurity.

Intemperance renders the soul incapable of any spiritual exercises; hence there is no progress possible until we vanquish our interior enemy, intemperance. The remedies opposed to gluttony are the virtue of temperance in eating and sobriety in drinking. Total abstinence differs from sobriety only in degree, but the moderate use of wine becomes a duty, if one's health requires it, and total abstinence becomes obligatory on those who cannot moderately use intoxicants or have made the vow of total abstinence. In general, total abstinence is a perfection. A second remedy against gluttony is found in fasts and other austerities, compatible with one's strength and duty; and thus we follow in the footsteps of Our Lord and of His saints. With regard to fasts we must, nevertheless, guard against excesses, for it is not allowed to injure one's health through them, nor are we justified in making ourselves incapable of performing our duties. Those who are exempt from fasting, should not fast strictly without their director's permission, but if they are otherwise strong and healthy, they should substitute for it some other mortification, such as additional prayers, or abstain from delicacies, from amusements, etc. II—I—II—pp. 213-220.

Temperance considered as a cardinal virtue restrains the passions of the soul and the sensual appetites. Its influence extends to all moral virtues by preventing excesses and by promoting moderation. As a special virtue, temperance moderates man's sensual appetites according to right reason and Divine Law. Intemperance makes man similar to the brute and unfit for the proper use of his intellect and will, the noblest faculties of his being. It confuses the mind and corrupts the heart, and leads to hardness of heart and loss of faith. Temperance quickens man's intellect, develops his reason, favors sound judgment, strengthens his will, clears his memory of the reminiscences and representations of intemperate festivities, and leads to purity of heart. Temperance in eating and drinking is urged upon all, and to eat and drink for the sole pleasure it procures to the palate is contrary to the designs of the Creator, who endowed man with taste and appetite to warn him of needful regular food. Mortification, so much decried by Protestants and infidels, conforms to the teachings of the Bible, to the practice of the early Christians and even to the tenets of many of the Pagan philosophers. The necessity of mortification is better understood if we consider the supernatural destiny of man, who forfeited it through Adam's sin, but was reinstated in all his privileges through Christ. Nevertheless, our vitiated nature, through original sin, remains and mortifications become necessary to curb the passions of the soul and the sensual appetites. Mortifications should not be excessive, for due regard must be had to one's health and strength of the body, and if they prevent the proper compliance with the duties of one's state of life, such unreasonable mortifications are unlawful and deserve condemnation. III—IV—pp. 327-334.

Theological Virtues. Theological or divine virtues are those which have God for direct object: moral virtues have God for ultimate end through some good work done to please Him. The divine virtues are faith, hope and charity, and they are infused into the soul with sanctifying grace. As virtues they incline us to believe and hope in God and to love Him; they come from God and directly tend to our union with God. The loss of faith entails the loss of hope and charity, and charity is lost with the loss of either hope or faith; but faith is not necessarily lost through the loss of either hope or charity or of both; and neither is hope lost through the loss of charity. Faith is lost through infidelity, hope through despair and charity through any grievous sin. As to the moral virtues, which are infused into the soul with sanctifying grace, they cannot exist without charity. IV—Introduction, p. 451.

Temptations against Faith, see Faith.

Temptations during Meditation. Temptations are not a sufficient reason to abandon the exercise of meditation; because they are either the suggestions of the evil one, or spring from the concupiscence of the flesh or from our evil passions. Mental prayer cannot be the direct cause of temptation, but it may be an occasion of it, like any other act, such as reading, eating or drinking, etc. Pious people simply despise temptations and drive them off. If temptations are persistent the Sign of the Cross, and an ejaculatory prayer or an affectionate movement of the heart towards our loving Father will usually dispel the temptation, but if not, let pious souls remember that temptations, like aridities, only increase our merit, if we courageously continue to perform our meditation in the best manner possible, in spite of such temptation, pp. 62-63. (See also Discernment of Spirits—Appendix.) Temptations rise in the dissipation of our mind. See Means to preserve recollection—Presence of God—I—VIII—p. 113. Temptations of the devil. Those who aim at perfection are especially subject to the temptations of the devil. Nevertheless, fear of Satan's attacks should not discourage us, but should incline us to vigilance and to trust in God, for we need not fear what will cover us with glory, provided we remain faithful to the divine inspirations and resist all temptations courageously. Temptations are trials permitted by God to reward the victors over Satan with greater merit and a brighter reward for all eternity. 1. Temptations are useful to inspire us with deep humility, as well as with great diffidence of our strength. With St. Paul we should glory in our infirmities that God's grace, that is, His power and aid, may be manifested and abount in us. 2. Temptations—although we should not seek them—are occasions of greater merit, but one thing we must guard against is to attribute our victories over Satan to our own efforts, for all supernatural good comes from God, yea, even the thought, desire, or will to undertake a virtuous deed is due to His bounty. Temptations permitted by our Heavenly Father are thus a boon we should welcome as a means of

greater perfection. What are the means by which we can overcome the devil? (a) We should reject promptly and energetically the first suggestions of evil, for Satan's attacks weaken in proportion to the vigor of our defence, and hence, a feeble resistance, being a venial sin, weakens the soul and makes us less worthy of God's help. (b) We should have recourse to fervent prayer as soon as with God's grace we have made the first determined resistance inspired thereto by the horror of sin. In temptations, the Sign of the Cross is an armor that shields us. (c) All people of whatever age or condition should avoid the near occasions of temptations, for "He that loves danger shall perish therein;" and why? Precisely because continual danger makes us despise it. Nevertheless, a prudent director may sometimes allow his penitent to provoke an attack from the irascible passions, as for instance, by frequently people of a disagreeable temperament. (d) Many reasons urge upon us the advisability of taking counsel with our spiritual director in all serious temptations. This becomes obligatory upon the scrupulous and upon those that are ignorant of Satan's many ruses and of the aid he seeks to insure our ruin. Recourse to God's ministers honors Him and fosters humility, while diffidence of ourselves and their direction are indispensable to successful planning the most useful means to overcome all kinds of temptations. The foregoing applies also to religious who are often deceived by the appearance of virtue. (e) Absolute confidence in God which rests on His goodness and on the conviction that we can do nothing without Him, is a bulwark of strength in our warfare with Satan; for God is a faithful ally and all-powerful prayer is always available, and then our gracious God fights at our side. II—VI—pp. 292-303. (*Cf.* Discernment of Spirits—Temptations—Appendix.)

Tepidity. 1. Disgust for spiritual exercises and devotions are ordinarily signs of tepidity, a sad and dangerous state from which a Christian can emerge only through great effort, and these are well-nigh impossible, as tepidity hardens one's heart and makes him indifferent to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. 2. Nevertheless, if disgust for spiritual exercises comes from aridity, which is sent by God as a trial or is caused with God's permission by the ruses of Satan, such disgust, not being voluntary, is not sinful and that tepidity, the concomitant of aridity, is totally different from the aridity of which there is question here and which is a natural consequence of a careless life and of the neglect of one's duties. 3. A third proof of tepidity is found in them who are easily satisfied with their conduct as long as they do not neglect a duty commanded under pain of sin, and thus they neglect many means of tending towards holiness. Let these be reminded that in the spiritual life one cannot stand still. He who fails to progress, goes back. 4. Another proof of tepidity is seen in religious who formerly found great consolations in their piety and devotion, and now seek consolation and distraction

in frivolous conversations and useless reading regarding the news of the day. Such useless occupations cause useless thoughts and lays the mind and heart open to the attacks of Satan. 5. Religious, as well as people in the world, should, when they begin to feel the first effects of tepidity or lukewarmness in God's service, ponder seriously on the dangers of tepidity and resolve to return without delay to the practice of the virtues and spiritual exercises, which brought them formerly much spiritual joy and consolation. I—II—pp. 34, *et seq.*

The Tongue. The tongue is difficult to control: it is a little fire that kindles a great wood. Only a perfect man can bridle his tongue. The first means to bridle the tongue is prayer. The second lies in considering the evil an unbridled tongue causes and in endeavoring to free the heart from dangerous affections. The third consists in watching over our conversations and in thinking before we speak. As to this, a daily examination of what we have said and how we said it is very useful. Humility and modesty are also great aids to bridle the tongue. If we except the time of recreation and of silence imposed by the rules, religious should keep habitual silence, and this practice is very necessary to those who have a glib tongue and, besides, it fosters recollection. Habitual silence is also a means of mortification and of gathering knowledge from the conversation of wise men. II—I—V—pp. 233-239.

Tribulation, see Patience and Conformity.

V

Vainglory. Vainglory consists in seeking the manifestation of one's excellence for the sake of gaining praise, from which glory ensues. Pride is the source of vainglory. Vainglory is an insidious passion of which few are free. It is the vice of those who strive for perfection, for their very virtues are occasions of sin, and it crops out in all they do. Vainglory manifests itself in the affection for vanities, when we seek to attract attention, when we speak of friends and relatives, and when we pride ourselves for the good we lack by blaming others for it. Although not in itself a mortal sin, it robs us of a part, or of all the good work done under its influence. It leads to ambition, presumption, jactation, hypocrisy, stubbornness, discord, contention and disobedience. The means by which we may overcome vainglory and with it ambition and presumption are: prayer and humility in our thoughts and actions, which gives to God the glory for the good there is in us. The custom of performing all our actions for the honor and glory of God and the hiding of our good qualities from others are much to be recommended as means to overcome the vice of vainglory. II—IV—pp. 263-278.

Vainglory, Presumption and Ambition. I. Honor is due to one who excels, and recognition of any one's excellence in speech, is called praise, and glory follows upon honor and praise, when these become known to many. The inordinate desire of honor orig-

inates in pride, for pride is an inordinate appetite for one's excellence, and pride is the beginning of all sin, because it leads man to abandon his God through self-love, which together with ambition and presumption, are the principal daughters of pride. II. In things spiritual, presumption is a rash expectation of salvation without taking hold of the means indispensable to attain it. Presumption is frequently condemned in Holy Writ, which also teaches us diffidence of ourselves and confidence in God. We are guilty of presumption if we seek a dignity whose obligations we do not understand, or if we undertake an office for which we do not possess the necessary qualities, and if we foresee the harm to ourselves or to others by our inaptitude, we sin likewise against charity or justice. It is presumptuous to expect with certainty favors from God, as due to our merits; it is presumptuous to advise others in weighty matters without sufficient learning and experience, as well as to expect success in an undertaking regardless of our weakness and unpreparedness. Finally, it is criminal to presume on God's goodness that He will save us, even if we neglect the means of salvation. This is properly presumption in a theological sense, and it is a sin against the Holy Ghost. We must give honor to whom honor is due, first to God, because of His supreme excellence; also to His angels and saints and to those wielding authority, and even to our equals, as children of a common Father, but especially to all the members of Christ's mystical body, and, finally, also to those who are placed under us, provided they comply faithfully with their duties. II—IV—pp. 264-267—Remedies against Presumption, p. 274—See also Hope (Motives of). III. Ambition is sinful only when it is inordinate, that is, if a position of honor is sought, either with too much eagerness or by disregarding the rights of others. Ambition is also vitiated by pretending to qualities one has not, or by referring his dignity to his own merit without praising God for it; but ambition of worldly honor and glory is so damnable in its consequences that volumes would be required to simply enumerate them. II—IV—pp. 268-271—Remedies against Ambition, p. 274.

Veracity. Veracity is a special virtue which inclines one to speak the truth. It depends on justice, for people have the right to receive from their neighbor truthful information. He that speaks the truth according to his knowledge—although he errs in his statements—is truthful, and he that tries to deceive is called a **prevaricator, a liar. Deception in one's conduct is simulation or** hypocrisy. Veracity is a reflection and participation of the truth that is in God, for God is truth. Falsehood is a social evil. Fidelity to one's promise is closely allied to veracity, for a promise must be sincere, and it ordinarily entails upon the promiser a duty of justice, p. 423.

Vocation. There are three states to which a special vocation is attached: the priesthood, the religious state in a community ap-

proved by the Church, and the lay state. Women are only called to the two last named. In the lay state there are the state of marriage and the state of celibacy or virginity. The priesthood excels in dignity all other callings, but the religious state is the most perfect. The religious state is again subdivided into the active state and the contemplative state. Two things are required to embrace a religious life: a true vocation and the proper qualities, as well as a pure intention. Purely human motives should not enter into a choice of life, and the principal motive should be the will of God, the desire to secure one's salvation or to lead a more perfect life, and zeal for the honor of God and for the spiritual welfare of one's neighbor. Vocation, in general, is the call of God to occupy the place He has destined for each person at his or her entrance into life. The importance of knowing one's vocation follows from the graces that God attaches to the calling He has chosen for each one of us. The signs of a vocation to a religious life are the following: aptitude, inclination and the approbation of one's director of conscience and of ecclesiastical authority. (a) Aptitude. If God calls anyone to a particular state of life, He will also bestow the necessary qualities to comply with his duties. (b) An inclination or attraction to a religious state is an ordinary proof of a vocation thereto; for if it be persistent, we may judge that the inclination is from God. (c) The third sign of a true vocation is found in the approbation of those whom God has chosen to be the directors of consciences, and of the prelates and superiors who are responsible before God for the government of religious institutes. There are two obstacles to a religious vocation, one from the part of the devil and one from the part of parents and relatives, who prize more the temporal interests than the eternal happiness of those whose vocation they oppose. Parents wrongly imagine that they lose the affection of their children when they enter into a monastery or convent; for the affection of sons and daughters for their parents becomes purer and more supernatural when they join a religious community, and they prove their love for their parents by praying for them and by offering up their good works for their temporal and eternal happiness. Religious institutes differ mainly from all other societies by the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, deservedly called the three evangelical counsels, and they differ again by a community life under certain rules approved by the Church. Vows are solemn or simple, but they are both equally binding upon the conscience of those who make the vow. Vows are again temporary or perpetual, but solemn vows are always perpetual. The principal advantages and supernatural merits of making the vows in a religious congregation or institute are: 1. By the vows one offers to God what is most dear to him and most difficult to part with, to wit: the sacrifice of his will. Therefore, there can be nothing more acceptable to God ? The most ordinary occupations of professed religious,

if undertaken in the spirit of the order, become acts of the virtue of religion, the greatest of all moral virtues. 3. If for any good reason religious are excused from the observance of their duties, they do not entirely lose the merit of them. 4. The acts of any virtue, practiced in accordance with the rules of the order have a double merit, one of the virtue that is practiced and the other that of religion. 5. The last advantage is peace of heart and of mind. See Introduction, pp. 4-8.

Voluntary Poverty, see Poverty, the Spirit and Vow of Poverty.

Vows, see Acts of Religion; see also Introduction, p 13, *et seq.*

W

Works of Mercy. There are two kinds of works of mercy: corporal and spiritual. There are as many corporal works of mercy as there are temporal sufferings or needs of the body or soul, which a charitable deed may remove or relieve. All help given to a neighbor in his temporal necessities is usually designated by the name of almsgiving, and as such, it is a moral virtue which inclines us to give, through compassion, something to the needy in a spirit of charity. It differs from benevolence, whose motive is natural compassion only. Almsgiving is inculcated in Holy Writ as a strict precept. It insures mercy from God, brings spiritual, and often temporal, blessings, and satisfies for the temporal punishment due to sin; because it includes some sacrifice either of our worldly goods or of our comfort, whilst the spirit of liberality moderates the love of riches and the fear of losing them. Spiritual works of mercy are far nobler, more beneficial and salutary than the corporal works of mercy, principally, because the former have for end the eternal welfare of man, whilst the latter seek directly man's temporal comfort. A spiritual gift excels forsooth a temporal gift: the soul is more noble than the body; charity is usually the motive of spiritual works, whilst benevolence or natural compassion often inclines exclusively to deeds of corporal relief. Therefore, it is justly said that the works undertaken to relieve the spiritual necessity of others is a divine work, meriting from God an eternal reward. All spiritual works of mercy may be comprised under the name of fraternal correction or the admonition by which one strives through a feeling of charity for the emendation of a sinner or aims at preventing a neighbor's sin. The obligation of fraternal correction springs from the duty of brotherly love, and it is imposed by Our Lord upon all who are capable of it. By fraternal correction we co-operate with God's mercy towards the conversion of sinners, for with His graces in keeping a neighbor from offending Him. Fraternal correction is principally the duty of superiors, strictly imposed upon them by charity and justice. It should be undertaken in a spirit of charity, with moderation and meekness in words and in actions. The order to be usually observed in correction is given by Our Savior Himself, but there are circum-

stances that would preclude its adoption, as when the evil deed has become public. When is one bound in conscience to undertake fraternal correction and when not? Rules to be observed regarding the person to be admonished, the harm that may follow the correction and the probability of a successful issue. IV—III—V—pp. 558-568.

Z

Zeal for God, see Love of Benevolence.

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